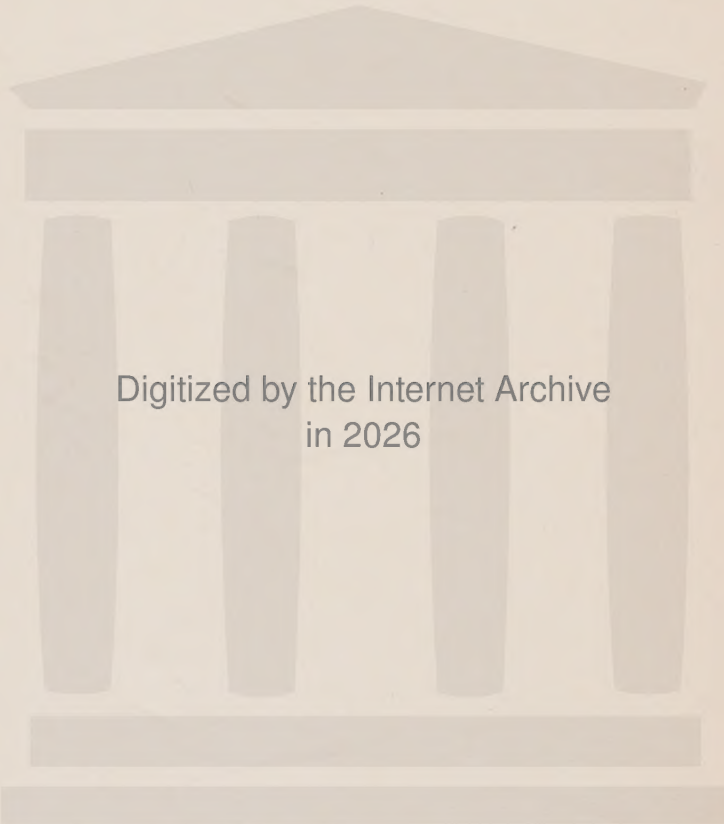




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STORISENDE EDITION · XIII

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY
THE JEWEL MERCHANTS

*“Echo, parlant quand bruyt on maine
Dessus rivière ou sus estan,
Qui beauté eut trop plus qu’humaine.”*

From the Hidden Way
The Jewel Merchants

Dizain and Comedy of Echoes

BY
JAMES BRANCH CABELL



ROBERT M. McBRIDE & COMPANY
NEW YORK . . . MCMXXIX

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THIS seems to me, in some sort, a volume of parentheses. Yet I think that Mr. Townsend's verse is a quite essential part of his portrait and of his gallant trifling with just half serious emotions, in an age not peculiarly favorable to a leisurely acceptance of life's pleasures, or of its pains either. For that reason his verse — to which you have already heard divers references in "The Cords of Vanity," and from which several extracts, whether with or without due acknowledgment, have elsewhere been cited in the Biography, — has been collected hereinafter.

It is, as for that matter all masculine verse ought to be, the verse of a very young man. And it appears to me to round off the portrait of Townsend by evoking, after the completion of "The Cords of Vanity," a figure not unfamiliar to anybody who has read the Biography thus far. I mean, the boy that one used to be, and is not any longer. . . . During my revisions of the Biography for this edition, I have found that boy ubiquitous. He enters the seventh chapter of "Beyond Life." He is the crux of the earliest written short-story, Love-Letters of Falstaff, and he confronts Gerald Musgrave at the end of the

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lateliest finished of all the comedies. Equally does the opening tale of the completed Biography end with Manuel's discovery of that boy in the pool of Haranton, just as you may find that the Biography itself culminates with the entrance of the author of "The Eagle's Shadow" into the library of the author of "Jurgen." His intervening appearances are to be listed in large figures rather than in the space here at my disposal. It is enough to say that all the inheritors of Dom Manuel's life have encountered this boy at one or another turn of their fortunes. . . . Well, in "From the Hidden Way" alone does this omnipresent stripling speak directly to you at any length: and logic urges that the person who enters the Biography more often than any other person is entitled to at least the major part of one volume all to himself.

That boy I have found everywhere in my writings, I repeat, just as I have found everywhere a variant of one "situation." I mean, the encounter of two persons between whom love has existed, and who speak together, as they believe, for the last occasion in their lives. I have not counted the exact number of times that this situation occurs in the Biography: that is merely because, after I had found it some sixty times, I stopped counting. But all through the Biography I have discovered the refrain: "You have been to me the most important person in the world. I shall not ever see you again. So now let us speak truthfully." And side by side with this I have found that other

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refrain: "I am that which you were, and are not any longer. You will not ever see me again. So now let us speak truthfully."

Just why these two especial notions should have thus haunted me throughout all of twenty-five years I do not know. But I do know that in my writings they are apparent everywhere. So I suppose I must believe, at the bottom of my heart, that if ever any man were for one instant to be candid with the persons most nearly intimate with him, or were to be candid with himself, it would be an unparalleled and a highly interesting adventure.

— All which is but a prologue to the statement that, although these verses seem remarkably alien to the graying Townsend whom I to-day meet now and then in Lichfield, in his staid and honored middle life, I suspect them to be an integral part of him, even now. So I include these verses in the Biography as a portion of his portrait, and as an appendix, which but for its forbidding length would have been a parenthesis, to "The Cords of Vanity."

You will find also in this volume my sole attempt at play writing, in "The Jewel Merchants." Since this, however, has an individual preface which explains this drama's origin and sole purpose, I need not go into these matters here. I remark only that "The Jewel Merchants" is not really, to my judgment, a part of the Biography, but, rather, an almost acci-

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dental excrescence. Still, it seems fairer to paint for you my protagonist warts and all. The connection is close: and, while "Poor Jack" (about which you may read somewhat in the Appendix) is allied to the Biography at a yet farther remove, reflection does not find it feasible to ignore either of these dramas in a collection of my writings. For I did, in point of fact, contribute all the dialogue to "Poor Jack" without intending to, and without, at that season, knowing "Poor Jack" to exist.

THE verses in "From the Hidden Way" date mainly, in their first forms, from 1895 to 1900. So near as I can recall, *The Castle of Content* is the most ancient of them: I know it was written in the October or the November of 1895; and I find this lament for so long evanished youth an eminently characteristic production for a boy of sixteen. But all these verses were revised, and were yet again revised, until as late as 1912. In the spring of that year they were put into very much their final form. The changes which have been made since then, while omnipresent, and the rhymes of any later date in composition, are few.

"From the Hidden Way" was produced in book form — through one of those shrugged concessions with which publishers now and then humor the childishness of authors, — in the November of 1916. We did not expect the volume to pay for the expense involved in printing it; and its success as a marketable

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product did not in anything betray our expectations. I was to receive a royalty, my publishers agreed, "for all copies of said Work actually sold by them, after 750 copies had been sold." But as they printed only 620 copies, I rather fancy that clause was meant from the first to be sarcastic. The book was republished in the Kalki edition, in 1924: and the receipt of my royalty statements as to "From the Hidden Way" has remained since then a semi-annual humiliation.

THEN again, in August 1928, the Crosby Gaige Company published, in a limited edition, "*Ballades from the Hidden Way*," with the following self-explanatory preface. I quote this preface because its tenor is by no means restricted to the ballades.

"Hereinafter I have but somewhat rearranged those verses in ballade form which compose a part of '*From the Hidden Way*.' They are perhaps not the least faulty of the rhymes to be found in a scrap-heap which contains nowhere, to my twentieth century taste, anything absolutely earth-staggering in merit. But the boy who wrote them left at his decease, as it happens, just enough ballades — or, in any event, just enough verses which were virtually ballades, — to make up a volume of the exact size desired by my present publishers. It was an accident which appeared so plainly providential that I have preferred to shift responsibility; and to let coincidence serve as the real editor, in the shaping of this selection.

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"And now that it is made I weigh the result with very liberally miscellaneous emotions. Yet, after all, Landor has here said the last word: — 'I would not stand upon my verses: it is a perilous boy's trick, which we ought to leave off when we put on square shoes. Let our prose show what we are, and our poetry what we have been.'"

"I permit this volume, then, to serve its purely Landorian end. And I have dedicated it, perforce, to that lady whom for the longest period of time I have regarded with a respectful and quite hopeless affection."

The lady referred to was Mrs. Millamant; and the dedicatory verses are to be found hereinafter under the title "The Way of the World."

THIS present volume, then, contains, with but very few exceptions, each bit of verse which I have ever published anywhere. I have included all rhymes which seemed to me — almost — able to stand alone, through howsoever minor merits, as individual productions.

I have omitted some of the verses contributed, during 1895-98, to the William and Mary College Monthly: none of them, by excellent luck, were signed with my name, and nobody can ever prove that I wrote them. These pages do not include the Sonnets from Antan, because, whensoever these verses are regarded in disjunction from the explanatory

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notes which Gerald Musgrave made for them, they appear, to me at least, rather meaningless. I have left out, through somewhat similar reasons, the acrostic dedications to "Beyond Life," "The Silver Stallion," and "Jurgen," as well as the heroically rhymed Prologue and Epilogue to "Gallantry." I have omitted, too, the sirvente which young Duke Jurgen composed in honor of the Princess Guenevere, because to include that passage would be to take sides in the as yet unsettled question whether or no this sirvente be truly a sonnet. Bülz's testimony here, as in so many other places, seems inconclusive. And I have included only one of my experiments in contrapuntal prose, after some brief hesitation over a few of which the forms are strictly metrical, such as the inscription which Jurgen found upon the signboard, in the fifth chapter of his adventurings.

BUT I paused rather longer in considering "Big Names and Little Verses." This, one should here explain, was a mildly regrettable volume published in 1915, to which a vast and very mixed lot of writers and illustrators contributed; and of which the proceeds, such as they were, went to a philanthropic organization which aimed to purvey a dependable brand of milk to indigent babies. I can, across the fourteen years, just cloudily recall being asked to write a set of verses for this pot-pourri. But one finds therein, instead, signed with my name, only an apologetic and

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disclamatory note to the lady editors. It is here quoted in full:

"Mesdames,—Your compilation is a book I would have taken pride to figure in, if it had not, unfortunately, been beyond my powers, or by hook or crook, to write in verse, — or, rather, what might look like verse if printed so as to begin each line with capitals. I hate like sin to have to say so, but you much mistook my capabilities — and flattered me thereby, of course, — in thinking that I would have skill to fashion verses fit to be identified with any cause so good as your most meritorious charity, which I would gladly further if I could."

That note, I am told, is incidentally a sonnet. But for one reason and another I prefer not to take advantage of the coincidence; and, in consequence, the note has not been included in this book.

WITH then these dubious and few exceptions, you have hereinafter all the verses which I have ever published. I have once more rearranged them: and I regard them with at least the respect appropriate to their not inconsiderable age, when I reflect that virtually all these rhymes date from another century than ours. These specimens of late Victorian verse have since then been, as I have told you, a little pinked and titivated; indeed, I hereinafter have made yet again a few changes from the earlier printed versions: but, upon the whole, these verses, howso-

AUTHOR'S NOTE

ever often revised, yet stand very much as they were first written during the last years of the nineteenth century.

One touches here the annoying defect of all verse. Prose, which aspires toward loftier goals, is, as Stevenson has phrased it, "never done": for a really good prose style aims well beyond that which is possible to human achievement, and so incurs no danger of perfection. In consequence you can always and forever tinker with any imaginable prose passage and improve it, if only by just a little. Verse, though, in its perpetually young fields, is but too apt by and by to become perfect, through ever-faithful revision, — perfect, in that it is at last, whether really good or no, at any rate everywhere as good as it can be made; — and for that reason no mentally adventurous and mature writer can ever be very long or very gravely interested by verse-making. Verse finally gets finished as completely as a cross-word puzzle.

These verses have, in my opinion, reached that state. — Which is but another way of saying that, although not for one illusory instant can I think they are remarkably fine verses, I do incline to hope that, after some and thirty years of repolishment, they are about as good as I could ever make them.

James Branch Cabell

Cayford Cottage
August 1928

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FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

DIZAIN DES ÉCHOS

*" Tell me now in what hidden way is Lady
Flora, the lovely Roman? Where's Hipparchia?
and where is Thaïs? . . . Where is Echo? "*

To

BEVERLEY BLAND MUNFORD

(31 May 1910)

MOST blithe and sage and gentle, and most brave!
O true clear heart, so quick to wake and war
Against despondency, lest questioning mar
One hour of living, or foiled hopes enslave
And sour another's living! not to the grave
Do we commit you, — we that, watching, are
As men at twilight noting which bright star
Is leaped at, missed, clutched, swallowed by which wave.

The star is gone? — So be it. It will rise
Elsewhere, and undiminished. Even thus
We know that instantly in Paradise —
Yea, in the inmost court of Heaven's house, —
A gentleman to God lifts those brave eyes
Which yesterday made life more brave for us.

APOLOGIA AUCTORIS

“ Vous entendez bien joncherie? ”

APOLOGIA AUCTORIS

§ 1

IN AGREEING to collaborate with Mr. Cabell, in preparing this volume of his selections from my inedited verses, I have been influenced by a number of considerations. I am attempting in this place to indicate a few of these.

To begin with, it is generally known — according to the literary reviewers, — that nowadays we are producing an indigenous “new” poetry, of hitherto unknown directness and simplicity; and that, in consequence, America is rendering her poets the unprecedented tribute of purchasing their volumes. That, of course, is one consideration.

Conceivably, too, I think, it may be not unsalutary, at this especial moment, to contrast the output of what has been, in another place, not inappropriately described as “the new naïveté” with the productions of poets who were in reality naïve. Conceivably, at least, one way of learning what is actually “natural” is to observe the ways of unsophisticated persons. This much preamble comes as warning that hereinafter you may look to encounter, in default of the debatable simplicities of “new” poetry, those genuinely simple melodies which were born of ages less complex.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

§ 2

I admit that, poetry having become in some sort a salable commodity, a book of verse no longer absolutely demands, as in the old days, a preface to explain and palliate its existence. None the less, these verses based upon pre-Renaissance formulæ must keep to the fashion of their time, and come with a prose pursuivant.

For the way needs clearing, since the road is clogged with the makings of an ugly syllogism. No matter with what joy we may admire "the new naïveté," the poverty of thought evinced in mediæval poetry remains notorious; and it is, after all, only the mental gist of a poem which is translatable.

Yet, in truth, the feature which repels, and troubles us, is not so much that the thoughts of these men were feeble as that their beliefs were firm. The springtide awakens loveliness and human joy therewith, true love ennobles the lover, and death is a terrific adventuring into the dark; such was their simple *credo*: and their belief in its tenets was unquestioning. Now, it is perhaps more subtle to consider spring as a meteorological phenomenon, love as an ingenious device for perpetuating the species, and death as a logical progression toward higher spheres of activity; yet each may be a miracle, for all that; and not any longer to see its wonder may quite conceivably be loss rather than gain. Ophthalmia is at the best an infirm basis whereon to assume airs of superiority.

Just so, these mediæval rhymesters wrote by choice of

APOLOGIA AUCTORIS

what to us seems prosaic because to them it was, throughout, heart-shakingly strange. Their more alert perceptions were aware of a continuous wonderfulness, on every side, which we have learned to overlook. It really is astounding, when you come sanely to think of it, to find a frost-nipped world converted overnight into a place of warmth and beauty; and they said so, in the best language they could muster. We heirs of more sophisticated ages cannot but assent; yet even those few of us who are still guilty, say, once in a blue moon, of reading a little time-honored verse, avert with more congenial interest toward the straggling eccentricities of *vers libre* and of polyphonic prose, with such eye-arresting gambits as "We maidens are many of us older than sheep," and "Hey, old world, shove your staid bonnet over your ear! "

It were flippant to suggest this is the interest that we accord, with livelier concern, to any other approach of the mentally unbalanced. Yet wonder, not bewilderment, is the gateway to the palace of art. The grand power of poetry, in particular, is its interpretative faculty of so dealing with familiar things as to awaken a full and new sense of their strangeness. And life affords nothing more remarkable than its truisms. There is a waggish saying somewhere as to how eagerly we would all scramble for the best seats if God heralded the coming of the crocus by mailing circulars or announced a sunrise via the public journals. The conceit is sound; for Omnipotence would, so to speak, be versifying the commonplace by stressing its importance, much as a noble rhyme and meter emphasize so insistently

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

the thought they clothe that the whole matter dwindles into bathos if (after all) the thought prove mediocre. Yet the real wonderfulness of the terrestrial pageant, even then, would consist, not in its felicities of color, but in its commonplaceness. For the most beautiful and terrible thing about a sunrise is that it happens every day. Just so the sun arose when Pliocene monstrosities held the earth as their heritage, just so it arose to waken the laborers of Nineveh, just so it arose as the cock crew and Peter for the third time denied his Master: and just so, too, it will arise — every day, — when Earth is a frozen clod, trundling voiceless and naked through infinity. A sunrise has nothing to do with man's existence, for all that it serves to time his clocks and rouse his factory-whistles; and therein lies the fundamental beauty of a sunrise, which is above and beyond and indifferent to the utmost reach of human achievement, and is therefore worthy to furnish recreation for human thought.

§ 3

Here, too, we touch one fallacy of our modernists who insist that poetry should deal with workaday life, and develop the poetic side of shopwindows and streetcars and pessimism. But in shopwindows and streetcars and consistent pessimism is to be contemplated nothing save what man, whether for good or ill, has heaped together in defiance of nature. He made these things, howsoever curious; he knows the elements whereof they are compounded; and he comprehends — there wakens disenchantment — that at a pinch he can patch up something else of pretty much the

APOLOGIA AUCTORIS

same sort. Not hereabouts is to be found aught fore-ordained and uncontrollable, or the beauty of fatality — of 'Ανάγκη — and human inefficiency thereunder, such as the old Greeks knew was necessary to art's highest strivings.

And what is this Hellenic 'Ανάγκη, after all, but the commonplace deified, with humanity as pawns? It is, assuredly, sheer commonplace to point out that more or less unpleasantness inevitably follows an elopement with another man's wife, or that miscegenation tends to shorten life; yet works of very real merit have been based upon these truisms, and nobody worth hearing will question the poetry of the *Iliad* or of *Othello*. Nor is, in either, the commonplace an inessential; attempting to imagine Helen as the fiancée of Menelaus, or *Othello* as a Caucasian, you flounder into the inconceivable.

An element of triteness, in fine, must be conceded as necessary to first class art. That which becomes a classic is, both by etymology and human nature, something which belongs to a class. It is not, or at least not in any discomposing way, unique: it is inoffensively innocent of any "disturbing novelty." Now, neither Ovid's Lynceus or Poe's Dupin, nor even the indestructible Mr. Holmes (of Baker Street, W. C. 1), could plausibly detect any disturbing novelty in the poets of Raynouard's *Choix des poésies originales des Troubadours* and Rochegude's *Parnasse Occitanien*: and when we find these tinkling verses, played always on the two strings of love and death, astonishingly naïve, the thing is partly owing, no doubt, to our superior perception of the proper ends of poetry, but partly

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

too to a more obtuse perception of life's actual wonderfulness. So is it that in criticism it behooves us, like Agag of old, to tread softly. By the rarest luck, there is no such pressing obligation laid on many of us touching poets — whether immortal or minor, — as compels us either to criticize or to read.

§ 4

And, truly, it is this consideration, above all others, which emboldens me to make a volume out of those verses that, for the most part, I “adapted” during my college life, from bardic byways of even more ancient eras. . . . For the rest, a formal bibliography of the sources of this little book was begun, and laid aside as entailing too much labor squandered to no utilitarian end. Petronius and Villon, at worst, require scant introduction to a generation which, the day before yesterday at any rate, was familiar with *Quo Vadis* and *If I Were King*.¹ With Alessandro de Medici, as he yet misconducts himself in Musset's *Lorenzaccio*, and in a smaller play called *The Jewel Merchants*, many of us preserve a bowing acquaintance, howsoever few extend the intimacy to include his Latin or Italian verses; which, if not positively unknown, would appear to have been overshadowed, even for the specialist, by the similar diversions of Alessandro's more gifted great-grandfather, Lorenzo the Magnificent. Then, too, Raimbaut de Vaqueiras and his beloved Belhs Cavaliers figure at respectable length in all books treating of Provençal poetry. And

¹ Villon was, at this writing, undefiled by musical comedy, and had not as yet endured the sugared indignities of the moving pictures.

APOLOGIA AUCTORIS

Nicolas de Caen has, at any event, afforded the late Mr. Howard Pyle the subject-matter for some striking paintings.

To the other side, apart from any poetical repute, oblivion has swallowed even Antoine Riczi's queer part in the matrimonial affairs of King Henry the Fourth of England. Such unfamiliar names as Charles Garnier and Théodore Passerat and Alphonse Moreau are not likely ever to cut a dash in popular romance; and, for very obvious reasons, just as in the cases of Petronius and Villon, their verses have never been adjudged particularly suitable for undergraduates to worry through in colleges. These, therefore, are indisputably forgotten, if indeed in any general sense they were ever known. Yet here as elsewhere — one would like to think at least, with the discoverer's thrill, — the "iniquity of oblivion" has scattered her poppy with rather injudicious cæcity.

If Petronius be not precisely mediæval, he is past doubt more antiquated than his present company in nothing save an accident of birth. And the inclusion of those scattered pieces hereinafter given severally under the name of Paul Verville has seemed on various grounds desirable, in spite of their (comparative) modernity of tone. Into the making of such decisions must always enter, of course, an element of purely personal taste, wherewith proverbially there can be no disputing to the arraigner's profit. To those who do not honor maxims, it can but be answered, with profound irrationality, that all the verses in this book possess at least the common feature of owing their existence in English to the fact that, once upon a time, to put them into English

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

seemed to their transcriber a natural and desirable action. No other bond has ever united the contents of any book of English verse. And although this particular excuse for making rhymes may very often prove inadequate, experience tends to show that any other reason proves so invariably.

§ 5

This book's sub-title appears to me a bit affected. But Mr. Cabell believes that it will please reviewers, by enabling them to start off with a smart witticism about its applicability to other books: and so I yield. . . . Moreover, I find that, in printing a collection of "adapted" verses, there seems to be no Median or Persic makeshift whereby plodding translation may, with the desirable precision, be distinguished from those less faithful paraphrases in which the plagiarist has more temerarily pulled about his larcenies. Upon consideration, this has appeared as satisfactory a rule of thumb as any: — to indicate the latter class by mention of an author's name; and with the former class, to include also the first words of the original. The curious may seek out at will the victims of some few unacknowledged borrowings.

ROBERT ETHERIDGE TOWNSEND

Lichfield
April, 1924

AT OUTSET

— After NICOLAS DE CAEN

*DEPART, depart, my book! and live and die
Dependent on the idle fantasy
Of men who cannot view you, quite, as I.*

*For I am fond, and willingly mistake
My book to be the book I meant to make,
And may not judge you, for that phantom's sake.*

*Yet pardon me if I have wrought too ill
In making you, that never spared the will
To shape you perfectly, and lacked the skill.*

*Ah, had I but the power, my book, then I
Had wrought in you some wizardry so high
That no man but had listened . . .*

*They pass by,
And shrug — as we, who know that unto us
It has been granted never to fare thus,
And never to be strong and glorious.*

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

*Is it denied me to perpetuate
What so much loving labor did create? —
I hear Oblivion tap upon the gate,
And acquiesce, not all disconsolate.*

FOR I HAVE GOT SUCH RECOMPENSE
OF THAT HIGH-HEARTED EXCELLENCE
WHICH THE CONTENTED CRAFTSMAN KNOWS,
ALONE, THAT TO LOVED LABOR GOES,
AND DAILY DOES THE WORK HE CHOSE,
AND COUNTS ALL ELSE IMPERTINENCE!

BOOK ONE

MIGONITIS

“Autant en emporte ly vens”

I. THE OLDEST STORY

"Jadis il était roy d'Argos"

— ANTOINE RICZI

HE was a king in Argos,
She was a queen in Tyre,
And they went astray from the jogtrot way,
In quest of the heart's desire.

They had pillaged, in royal fashion,
Rare raiments and spiceries
From the marts of Argos, to furnish them cargoes
For traffic in far-off seas;
And before them bright waters parted,
And the wind was fair.

Because

Love leads us — they spoke, light-hearted, —
Who is lord over man-made laws.

The High Gods noted them, idly
Lolling in Paradise,
And remarked they were erring widely
From rules the High Gods devise.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

But the Most High Gods were wise,
And conceded: — *They are not as we*
Whom no follies beguile; let them go for a while.
Yet presently all men must see
They attain not to where their desire is,
Lest laxity lose us men's love.
— Thus Wotan ordained, or Osiris,
Or Shiva, or Dagon, or Jove.
— *We must think of our pontiffs in Argos*
And praiseworthy prebends in Tyre,
Who would suffer dismay did the parish essay
To win to man's heart's desire.

So these two fared ever westward —
Elate, and in love with life —
Amid wide reprehension; for histories mention
These were not husband and wife
Who fared westward, ever westward.
— Beyond the Hesperides,
Where the slow long stroke of their gilt oars broke
The lisping of virgin seas,
They viewed the ends of the earth,
Where the Singing Maidens are
Enthroned above death and birth:
And they still fared ever westward —
Elate, and alone, and afar
From the yelpings of little people, —
For they viewed the ends of the earth.

MIGONITIS

Then the Gods gave word: and Their thunders stirred
To requite, and to silence mirth;
And that roving vessel was shattered
As a handful of shaken dust
Ere twice They thundered.

All peoples wondered,
And cried: — *Lo, the Gods are just,*
And, look you, abated no tittle
Of punishment due these twain.
Even though They slumbered a little,
We knew They would waken again:
And, whether it was Bubastis,
Or Milcom, or Artemis,
Or Baäl, or Zeus, interrupted this cruise,
We knew it would end in this
When he was a king in Argos,
And she was a queen in Tyre,
And they went astray from the jogtrot way,
In quest of the heart's desire.

THE OLD SONOROUS NAMES OF THESE
THAT FARED BEYOND THE HESPERIDES
IN QUEST OF REST AND JOY AND EASE,
LONG SINCE WERE MOCKED AT; AND WERE HISSED
BECAUSE NO GOAL THAT ALL MEN LIST
TO SEEK, THEY SOUGHT, — AND VIEWED, AND MISSED.

BUT LIFE REMAINS LIFE'S PLAGIARIST.

II. FALSE DAWN IN TROY

"Helenam omnes amant; invidia semper movente"

— ALESSANDRO DE MEDICI

THERE is no man but loves her, I well know;
Yet mutinous women, muttering with pinched lips,
Cast side-long glances always when — unvexed —
Queen Helen passes; for she is very fair,
And they have only right and truth with them.

Women remember all the fevered years
This siege has lasted; all its many ills;
The plague; the hunger; the unnumbered men
Who died because this queen is beautiful, —
Men whom they loved, and she loved not at all
Nor even knew by name.

None but remembers
How coldly loved lips kissed her in farewell, —
Coldly, because for fairer lips than hers,
And for the sake of brighter and tearless eyes,
This man went forth to battle. He thereafter
Beheld the plume of lithe Achilles leap
As flame among the fighting, or beheld
The sudden splendor of swart Diomed

MIGONITIS

Crash through the press of spears; and lay quite still,
Remembering that way Queen Helen has
Of laughter, when the little sigh breaks through
And spoils the music, or her way of speaking,
Which turns to music the most trivial words
Wherein that wonder and that wistfulness
Her voice has always held since Hector died,
Commingles with our rude and alien tongue
As honey with sharp wine. Such idle words
As any man who, with uncovered head,
Waits and makes way when princes will to pass,
May hear of her in passing, gladdened him,
For all that death was fingering his throat
Even now. He was content, remembering her
The Queen.

For she is very beautiful;
And doubtless Paris, too, gets joy of her
When in that gleaming place which is their home
Her soft arms lift, and clasp his neck, and loose
His helmet — scarcely dented as mine is,
Where that wolf-visaged Greek smote yesterday
Who smites no coward blows to-day, I think.
— But Paris loves not blows. And then he tells
His version of the battle; and they kiss;
And hear shrill women wailing over corpses
Without; and kiss once more. And so he lies
Upon his cushioned couch, and is content, —
Contented just to lie there, still as they

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Who fought for his love's sake lie now, and feel
Her fingers moving gently mid his curls,
And hear Queen Helen's laughter.

It is for this
That hollow-eyed C  none mumbles charms
On twin-peaked Ida; and gaunt Menelaus
Slays silently; and heaven is wroth; and the banks
Of slothful Styx, made populous with them
Whose bodies rot unburied on the plains
That girdle hapless Troy, are resonant
With lamentation.

Thus it is for this
One woman's sake, whose beauty is as a fire
Fed by contending kings with honor and fame
And memories of distant homes and wives,
That all without there is a mighty stir
Of clanging armors, wrangling foreign tongues,
And many Grecian huts about our walls;
And famine and death within. It is for this
One woman's sake — who sleeps now, and in sleep
Smiles, as I think, who may not see her thus, —
That we the common soldiers gather here,
Who are as naught in Troy Town, and go forth
As fodder to appease the fury of Death,
Who ravens by Scamander.

MIGONITIS

So we meet

In the deep dawn; and furbish up our arms;
And call one to another, in the dusk,
With hearthside sayings and century-old jests,
Until Æneas and Antenor come,
Our leaders, and with sharp words marshalling us,
Bid sound the trumpet, and the Tymbrian gate
Vomits us forth upon the barren plains.



III. EASTER EVE

" Ses meurtriers donc ses rencontraient de bon cœur "

— ALPHONSE MOREAU

HIS MURDERERS met. Their consciences were free:
The sun's eclipse was past, the tumult stilled
In Jewry, and their duty well fulfilled.

Quoth Caiaphas: — *It wrung my heart to see
His mother's grief, God knows! Yet blasphemy
Was proven, the uprising imminent,
And all the church-supporting element
Demanded action, sir, of you and me.*

Quoth Pilate: — *When this Nazarene denied
Even Cæsar's rule, reluctantly I knew
My duty to the state, sir. Still, I tried,
But found no way, to spare him yet stay true
In loyalty. . . . And still, the poor lad cried,
" Forgive them, for they know not what they do! "*

IV. ST. MAGDALENE

"Femme je suis, ridée, poverette et ancienne"

— THÉODORE PASSERAT

MUST I abide forever in this place
Of bloodless folk, amid the vain outcries
Of fools that deem me holy, full of grace,
And skillful in foresaying prophecies?
Thou wouldst not know me in this wrinkled guise —
How couldst thou, O belovèd? I am she
Thou knewest through mad years in Galilee
When we were young. And now thy tale is told,
And I await death, shivering wretchedly,
A pitiful poor woman, shrunk and old.

They call thee god. Paul, when his choleric face
Enkindles from his ever-blazing eyes,
Swears thou art god, and blusters of a place —
A city that the man calls Paradise, —
Wherein thou reignest. Dear, am I not wise
That deem thee worthy of idolatry,
Yet man, — man whom I loved, and verily
Man whom I love, for all that I behold
Thy face no more, belovèd, and I be
A pitiful poor woman, shrunk and old.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Yet westerly, where golden clouds enlace
Earth's rim with heaven's, kindlier kingdoms rise;
For there the fortunate Far Islands face
The ends of Ocean, and the sacrifice
Burns ever to Dis' Queen, and no man sighs
In vain for quietude, — where even we
May win such grace of grave Persephonê
As to obliterate woes manifold
In dragging days that fretted sordidly
A pitiful poor woman, shrunk and old.

Man whom I loved, my heart cries out to thee,
All that thou wert I loved! — and so, let be
To dream of maids immortal arms enfold,
Nor rank with Dryopê or Danaë
A pitiful poor woman, shrunk and old.

v. MARCUS AURELIUS: A SUPPRESSED
“MEDITATION”

“L'impératrice a les beaux yeux”

— ANTOINE RICZI

BRIGHT EYES in truth Faustina hath:
They are colored like that restive path
Which sunset cleaves across the sea;
They are as chill; it well may be
Their splendors, also, do but screen
Waste wreckage and coiled, slow, obscene,
Vague, ravenous things. It is of this
I think whenever her lips kiss.

She is brightly colored and soft and frail;
Her beauty like a tintured veil
Hides and divides her heart from me.

Nor would I vex your secrecy,
Grave eyes, that screen her unguessed heart,
Wherein I ask not any part;
It is enough that ye are bright.

I praise you; and am expedite
Once more to touch Faustina's hair

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Caressingly, one instant, where
Her face lifts now, and shows how fair
That body is which Parcæ planned,
And fashioned fitly, to command
Such love as all men understand.

Grant her unfaithful, and wherein
Am I less favored by Faustine
Than were her heart all faithfulness?

Fools in their folly face distress;
But wisdom muffles wisdom's sight
And looks for naught more recondite
In any woman's grace than this —
Fair flesh, bright hair, and lips that kiss
So winsomely that thereupon
Man's wisdom wins oblivion,
And right and reason, swooning, seem
Faint figments of a fool's fond dream.

VI. AMAIMON VISITS THE THEBAID

"Quam luna adest video nocte illusiones dæmonum"

— ALESSANDRO DE MEDICI

EACH NIGHT at moonrise is let forth from hell
In a fair woman's shape — yea, I know well
How fair it is! — Amaimon; and thus stands
A darkling shade against stilled seas of sands
Made wonderful with moonlight; and speaks not.

What need? — Amaimon knows I have forgot
No one of those soft curves Amaimon wears.

So have I need of penance and long prayers:
Because since ever time began to be,
No woman, living, was lovelier than she,
Nor statelier, — yea, buoyant with that power
Her beauty loaned, she moved as moves a flower,
Mire-rooted, nodding by a pool wherein
Its double drowns, and dancing when its twin
Struggles in wind-stirred waters.

Nay, most sweet
Of women, I serve that Man whose tortured feet
Spurned Zeus from heaven, and for human sake
Trod evil down, even as folk tread a snake

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

And end all, once for all; by night and day
My prayers assail the ears of God, nor stay
For any bodily weakness till I gain
Surety of pardon through my body's pain.

Hath God not pardoned me? Men tell of them
That bent with sickness touched my cassock's hem
And straight were hale. They tell how these poor hands
Raised dead folk even. Throughout distant lands
My fame is spread, where emperors quake to tell
Their harlots of some recent miracle
Which I — nay, which High God performed through me
That God's sole glory be proclaimed, and be
A scourge to scoffers.

So, being fain to die,
I bide that day when High God lifts on high
My soul, and sets me with His cherubim,
Remembering how I have striven for Him
And smitten heresy — yea, with sword and flame
Laid waste how many homes! — in His dear name,
Whose wrath is quenchless.

It is well with me:
O woman the fiend mimics, how is it with thee?
— With thee, enswirled in some unending sweep
Of ageless flame, whose fires forever leap
Like adders round the damned their coils consume
Not ever, nor relinquish! These illumine

MIGONITIS

Bright tender bodies, such as Cæsar kissed
But yesterday, and now long torments twist. . .
Ey, what a host of women howl in hell
Who were when they wore flesh so lovable,
And whom men loved as I —

But thou art dead,
Rotted, and damned, long since.

When I am sped
To heaven's loftiest courts, and thereamong
Made free of heaven, how shall I force my tongue
To honor Him that damned thee? and how be
Content with heaven? What, through eternity
Hear thy voice — thine, my lost love, loved in vain,
And lost, lost, lost, with only heaven to gain! —
Hear thy voice call in agony to God,
Who likewise hears — and heeds not!

Ey, once shod
With gold and clad in fair white linen cloth,
Shall I then be quite changed? and not be wroth
With God? but be as God is? and never know
Regret for thee, nor pity for the woe
Of shrieking fire-wrapped folk swept to and fro
Where Satan gibes at them and the worm stings?

Lust, who is overlord of living things;
Lust, by the heavings of whose leathery wings

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

The flames of hell are fanned to signal-fires
That mark each haven each human heart desires;
Lust, who with ceaseless and illusive snares
Derides our dreams and prompts us in our prayers;
Lust, who is strong and patient and cautelous,
And whom fiends name Amaimon in Satan's house:
Plays thus at dice, our stake being my soul's bliss.

*Nay, God is love (Amaimon whispers this),
Nor pedant-like peers from far heaven's vault
To estimate His children's least light fault
As folk weigh gold, to the last hair-breadth's worth.*

*Grant that this woman, living upon earth,
A little leaned to Marcion's mad creed,
That High God grieves when unbelievers bleed
And Holy Church's servants, or with rod
Or rack or rope, attest the might of God: —
"Because a father's love, pre-eminent
In Him, contrives no curious punishment,
But, even as earthly fathers check a child,
Reproves, and for love's sake is reconciled."
Thus runneth Marcion's foul heresy.*

*This woman, then, must burn. It yet may be
All need not burn for all eternity;
And God at last may pardon Donatists,
And Athanasians, and Tritheists —
Ho, even Marcionites! — as lacking wit
Always to read aright God's holy writ,
And, therefore, worthier of pity than hate.*

MIGONITIS

*For God is love; and love or soon or late
Forgives, — yea, even pardons thy dread to see
In God some burlier counterpart of thee.*

Such blasphemies Amaimon whispers me
Nightly at moonrise: and I answer not.

What need? — Amaimon knows I have forgot
No one of those soft curves Amaimon wears.

So have I need of penance and long prayers.

VII. DAME VENUS IN THURINGIA

"Icy je regne, et je m'assemble tous les hommes"

— THÉODORE PASSERAT

EVEN to the Hörselberg they follow me,
These men Thou couldst not save: the hollow hill
Is thronged with them that have abandoned Thee
To follow her that yet endures, and will
Outlive all tenets. Canst Thou ever still
Our revelry, O Christ? or canst Thou stay
These lips that on my lover's lips I lay,
Deriding Thee unpunished? Nay, God wot,
Here rest no pilgrims on Thy bloodless way,
Where in the Hörselberg we know Thee not!

We have no ending to our revelry;
Of lust and drunkenness we have our fill:
Thou hast the uplands, and the sun-bathed sea —
My mother sea! — is subject to Thy will,
Poor foolish Christ, that hadst not wit to kill
Her whom Thou hadst discrowned. I may not stray
Amid the fields of Paphos, and men pray
No more to me in Eryx; yet no jot
Of lust's old worship dwindles, even to-day,
Where in the Hörselberg we know Thee not.

MIGONITIS .

Wilt Thou not slay me for much blasphemy?
Strike and have done! Whom kindlier shouldst Thou kill
Than one begotten of the restive sea,
Thus penned, and turned a potent poison till
Man's folly fail him? — I with futile skill
Snare ceaselessly; and never see the day
Smite huddling golden waves; nor feel the spray
Make glad my lips. My godhead is forgot.
I tread a hill more drear than Golgotha,
Where in the Hörselberg we know Thee not.

Christ, curse me not with immortality!
I once was Aphroditê; must I be
A thing unclean, and unto fools allot
All fools may crave, even for eternity,
Where in the Hörselberg we know Thee not?

VIII. ONE END OF LOVE

"Yolande dit, en soupirant"

— ALPHONSE MOREAU

IT is *long since we met*, — she said.
I answered, — *Yes*.

She is not fair,
But very old now, and no gold
Gleams in that scant gray withered hair
Where once much gold was: and, I think,
Not easily might one bring tears
Into her eyes, which have become
Like dusty glass.

'Tis thirty years,
I said. — *And then the war came on*
Apace, and our young King had need
Of men to serve him oversea
Against the heathen. For their greed,
Puffed up at Tunis, troubles him —

She said: — *This week my son is gone*
To him at Paris with his men.
And then: — *You never married, John?*

MIGONITIS

I answered, — *No*. And so we sate
Musing a while.

Then with his guests
Came Robert; and his thin voice broke
Upon my dream, with the old jests,
No food for laughter now; and swore
We must be friends now that our feud
Was overpast.

We are grown old, —
Eh, John? — he said. *And, by the Rood!*
'Tis time we were at peace with God
Who are not long for this world.

— *Yea,*
I answered; — *we are old*. And then,
Remembering that April day
At Calais, and that hawthorn field
Wherein we fought long since, I said,
— *We are friends now*.

And she sate by,
Scarce heeding. Thus the evening sped.

And we ride homeward now, and I
Ride moodily: my palfrey jogs
Along a rock-strewn way the moon

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Lights up for us; yonder the bogs
Are curdled with thin ice; the trees
Are naked; from the barren wold
The wind comes like a blade aslant
Across a world grown very old.

BOOK TWO
EPISTROPHIA

“ Pour son amour eut cest essoyne ”

IX. VILLON QUITTS FRANCE

"Demain tous nous mourrons; c'est juste notre affaire"

— THÉODORE PASSERAT

WE HANG to-morrow, then? That doom is fit
For most of us, I think. Yet, harkee, friend,
I have a ballad here which I have writ
Of us and our high ending. Pray you, send
The scrawl to Cayeux, bidding him commend
François to grace. Old Colin loves me well,
For no good reason, save it so befell
We two were young together . . . When I am hung,
Colin will weep — and then will laugh, and tell
How many pranks we played when we were young.

Dear lads of yesterday! . . . We had not wit
To live always so we might not offend,
Yet — how we laughed! I marvel now at it,
Because that merry company will spend
No more mad nights together. Some are penned
In abbeys, some in dungeons, others fell
In battle. . . Time assesses death's *gabelle*, —
Salt must be taxed, eh? — well, we ranked among
The salt of earth, once, who are old and tell
How many pranks we played when we were young.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Afraid to die, you ask? — Why, not a whit.
Ah, no! whole-heartedly I mean to wend
Out of a world I have found exquisite
By every testing. For I apprehend
Life was not made all lovely to the end
That life ensnare us, nor the miracle
Of youth devised but as a trap to swell
Old Legion's legions; and must give full tongue
To praise no less than prayer, when bidden tell
How many pranks we played when we were young.

Nay, cheerily we of the Cockle-shell,
And all whose youth was nor to stay nor quell,
Will dare foregather when earth's knell is rung,
And Calvary's young conqueror bids us tell
How many pranks we played when we were young.

x. INVOCATION: TO THE DARK VENUS

"Audite litaniam, quam dulce in noctibus quondam"

—? ARCHILOCHUS OF SICYON

HEARKEN AND heed, Melænis!
For all that the litany ceased
When time had pilfered the victim,
And flouted thy pale-lipped priest,
And set astir in the temple
Where burned the fires of thy shrine
The owls and wolves of the desert —
Yet hearken, (*the issue is thine!*)
And let the heart of Atys,
At last, at last, be mine!

For I have followed, nor faltered —
Adrift in a land of dreams
Where laughter and pity and terror
Commingle as confluent streams,
I have seen and adored the Sidonian,
Implacable, fair and divine, —
And bending low, have implored thee
To hearken, (*the issue is thine!*)
And let the heart of Atys,
At last, at last, be mine!

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

There are taller lads than Atys,
And many are wiser than he, —
How should I heed them? — whose fate is
Ever to serve and to be
Ever the lover of Atys,
And die that Atys may dine,
Live if he need me — Then heed me,
And speed me, (*the moment is thine!*)
And let the heart of Atys,
At last, at last, be mine!

HIC TONAT: DEA ADEST

Fair is the form un beholden,
And golden the glory of thee
Whose voice is the voice of a vision,
Whose face is the foam of the sea,
And the fall of whose feet is the flutter
Of breezes in birches and pine,
When thou drawest near me, to hear me,
And cheer me, (*the moment is thine!*)
And let the heart of Atys,
At last, at last, be mine!

TUNC EUM DEA SECUNDAT

Long I besought thee, nor vainly,
Daughter of Water and Air, —
Charis! Idalia! Hortensis!

EPISTROPHIA

Hast thou not heard the prayer,
When the blood stood still with loving,
And the blood in me leapt like wine,
And I cried on thy name, Melænis? —
That heard me, (*the glory is thine!*)
And let the heart of Atys,
At last, at last, be mine!

Falsely they tell of thy dying,
Thou that art older than death;
And never the Hörselberg hid thee,
Whatever the slanderer saith;
For the stars are as heralds forerunning,
When laughter and love combine
At twilight, in thy light, Melænis —
That heard me, (*the glory is thine!*)
And let the heart of Atys,
At last, at last, be mine!

XI. RONSARD RE-VOICES A TRUISM

"Quand vous serez bien vieille, et quand je serais mort"

— THÉODORE PASSERAT

WHEN you are very old, and I am gone,
Not to return, it may be you will say —
Hearing my name and holding me as one
Long dead to you, — in some half-jesting way
Of speech, sweet as vague heraldings of May
Rumored in woods when first the throstles sing: —
He loved me once. And straightway murmuring
My half-forgotten rhymes, you will regret
Evanished times when I was wont to sing
So very lightly, *Love runs into debt.*

I shall not heed you then. My course being run
For good or ill, I shall have gone my way,
And know you, love, no longer, — nor the sun,
Perchance, nor any light of earthly day,
Nor any joy nor sorrow, — while at play
The world speeds merrily, nor reckoning
Our coming or our going. Lips will cling,
Forswear, and be forsaken, and men forget
Where once our tombs were, and our children sing —
So very lightly! — *Love runs into debt.*

EPISTROPHIA

If in the grave love have dominion
Will that wild cry not quicken the wise clay,
And taunt with memories of fond deeds undone —
Some joy untasted, some lost holiday, —
All death's large wisdom? Will that wisdom lay
The ghost of any sweet familiar thing
Come haggard from the Past, or ever bring
Forgetfulness of those two lovers met
When all was April? — nor too wise to sing
So very lightly, *Love runs into debt!*

Yea, though the years of vain remembering
Draw nigh, and age be drear, yet in the spring
We meet and kiss, whatever hour be set
Wherein all hours attain to harvesting, —
So, very lightly, love runs into debt.

XII. JAUNTS FROM STRATFORD

—“LOIN DE STRATFORD”: PAUL VERVILLE

[III—IN VERONA]

“Il m'étonne de voir que le vieux Capulet”

I HAD NOT thought the house of Capulet
Might boast a daughter of such colorful grace
As this whole-hearted girl, with flower-soft face
Round which the glory of her hair is set
Like some great golden halo; — and, as yet,
Love is to her a word that, spoken, spurs
Wonder alone, since love administers
In nothing to the mirth of Juliet.

What if some day I woke this heart unharried
As yet by love, and won these lips more red
Than rain-tossed cherries? — *Look, the dancers go.*
What's he that would not dance? If he be married
My grave is like to be my wedding-bed.
— God rest you, sweet! the knave is Romeo.

EPISTROPHIA

[XII—IN TROY]

" Le Scamandre engourdi, qui la lune illumine "

Stagnant Scamander, which the moon — a slight
Frail-seeming crescent toiling through gaunt trees
Mid stars that follow her like golden bees, —
Makes glittering; beyond its marge a white
Glitter of tossed bleached bones where camp-dogs fight
For offal, and a glitter of panoplies
Where sentinels prowl; and partly shrouding these,
Thin fever-breeding mists and dubious night.

And one clear song — fond, as all love-songs be —
From Troilus' fevered lips that give fond vent
To faith and wonder and idolatry,
Snapped short; and mutterings of thunder, blent
With cries of mourners, and the garrulous glee
Of Cressida in Diomedes' tent.

XIII. "THE WAY OF THE WORLD"

(1700)

A PASSING OF *ton* to and fro
Under the elm and the yew
(They were cut in odd shapes, as we know,
To recall his Dutch Majesty's *Loo*),
And all the polite on full view,
Where the Cyprians rove after dark,
In a bustling which glittered — and grew, —
When MILLAMANT walked i' the Park. . .

Fair as NINON DE L'ENCLOS,
And rich as old SHYLOCK (the Jew), —
Small wonder the wits and the *beaux*
Should eagerly turn, and pursue. . .
If the ladies turned also, *entre nous*,
In a fashion, 'twas but to remark
"That hoiden, whom nobody knew,"
When MILLAMANT walked i' the Park.

Now the foplings are fluttered. They go. . .
Now the witlings are fidgeting, too. . .
They are quelled by a splendor foe,
They are routed by such a *surtout*,

EPISTROPHIA

They are slain by the scarlet-heeled shoe,
The peruke, the *bel air*, of yon spark. . .
It was MIRABELL, coming to woo,
When MILLAMANT walked i' the Park.

In brief, there was nothing askew,
And love fared as light as a lark,
And only the heavens were blue,
When MILLAMANT walked i' the Park.

XIV. INVITATION TO THE VOYAGE

"Quand le poëte d'Angleterre disait que ce monde"

— PAUL VERVILLE

THE WORLD'S *a stage*? — Well, faith! it may have seemed so

In days less bleak, when Arden's brakes were green,
And Rosalind's low insolent fond laughter
Woke mirth to charm that planet which to-day
Seems all one vast decorous hospital, —
Germless, immaculate, well-ventilated,
Whitewashed, and odorful with antiseptics.

And we that toss upon the softest beds,
While yet our fever lasts, are impotent
Beneath this dreary burden of right angles
And blank white walls. And so, we twist, and murmur,
And groan, and twitch the coverlets awry,
Which Mrs. Grundy, head-nurse of our ward,
Pats straight again, in curtseying to the doctor.

Lean Dr. Death, who never lost a case,
Comes thus; and daily pauses by one's bed;
Fingers the pulse; declares the fever abating;
Writes a prescription for the apothecary,
Old Time; then cuts a jest or so, — departing
With dubious promises of one's discharge
Next year, next month, next week, may be.

EPISTROPHIA

Ha, neighbor,

Slim pale-haired woman with opal-colored eyes,
Why bide his pleasure? Nay, let us steal out
Together, and — blithe mariners faring forth
On chartless seas, — seek out a vessel bound
For some politer port, made point-device
By Fragonard, Watteau, or whom you will
So the contriver of this hospital
Be not the architect.

Oh, dimly gleams

Our haven; for its ways are vaporous
With smouldering incense, mid whose loitering spirals
Frail cupids weave, eternally, long garlands
Of ribbons and pale roses, — weave unweaved
By any garish sunlight, since one star
Alone peeps out of heaven. See, the moon
Shows like a silver sickle to the west,
But casts no shadows yet; and twilight dims
All glow of color where resistless gallants,
Sleek abbés, and false subtle lovely women
Pass to the sound of tinkling mandolines
And hushed contralto laughter.

We will make

Rondeaux of life and triolets of death;
And be at peace; and never laugh aloud;
And grieve not though he mar those stately hedges
Wherethrough he leers — gaunt sensual Pierrot! —
To note the ankles of young Columbine.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Yes, we will smile to see her pirouette
With Harlequin in shadowed avenues, —
Yew-shadowed statue-haunted avenues,
Where pensive gods incuriously remember
Put-off omnipotence, — with Harlequin
While tricked Pierrot sings at her father's window. . .
Smile, it may be, but never laugh aloud.

And in the autumn Columbine will die,
And Harlequin be sad a whole half-hour.
But Pierrot's heart will break; and he will grieve
That so much earth lies heavily on her
Who trod the earth so lightly! — and will weep
Big facile tears, and babble to the moon.

Will you not go? — Then come. Give me your hand, —
That firm small slender hand. Tread quietly,
For Mrs. Grundy nods now, who will wake
Full-cry when all our fellow-patients chatter
And drone and bustle like fat surfeited flies
Round our dead reputations.

Let us go.

xv. STORY OF THE FLOWERY KINGDOM

"La belle Sou-Chong-Thé, au clair de pleine lune"

— PAUL VERVILLE

F AIR SOU-CHONG-TEE, by a shimmering brook
Where ghost-like lilies loomed tall and straight,
Met young Too-Hi, in a moonlit nook,
Where they cooed and kissed till the hour was late:
Then, with lanterns, a mandarin passed in state,
Named Hoo-Hung-Hoo of the Golden Band,
Who had wooed the maiden to be *his* mate, —
For these things occur in the Flowery Land.

Now, Hoo-Hung-Hoo had written a book,
In seven volumes, to celebrate
The death of the Emperor's thirteenth cook:
So, being a person whose power was great,
He ordered a herald to indicate
He would blind Too-Hi with a red-hot brand
And marry Sou-Chong at a quarter-past-eight, —
For these things occur in the Flowery Land.

Whilst the brand was heating, the lovers shook
In their several shoes, — when by lucky fate
A Dragon came, with his tail in a crook, —
A Dragon out of a Nankeen Plate, —

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

And gobbled the hard-hearted potentate
And all of his servants, and snorted, *and*
Passed on at a super-cyclonic rate, —
For these things occur in the Flowery Land.

The lovers were wed at an early date,
And lived for the future, I understand,
In one continuous tête-à-tête, —
For these things occur . . . in the Flowery Land.

xvi. THE HOIDENS

"Au point du premier jour, dans l'enfance du tout"

— ANTOINE RICZI

WHEN THE Morning broke before us
Came the wayward Three astraying,
Chattering in babbling chorus,
(Obloquies of Æther saying), —
Hoidens that, at pegtop playing,
Flung their Top where yet it whirls
Through the coil of clouds unstaying;
For the Fates are captious girls.

CLOTHO

*Why, upon that Toy before us
Insects cluster! Hear them saying,
In the quaintest shrillest chorus: —
'Life affords no time for playing!
And for each that goes astraying,
Featly as a planet whirls
Drops the stroke of doom unstaying,
For the Fates are captious girls.'*

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

LACHESIS

*La, I thought it reeled before us
Tumbling, lurching, stumbling, straying,
In some sort of mumbling chorus!
Now I see them at their playing —
I too see, — and hear them saying: —
'Note with what fixed aim life whirls
Onward to set goals unstaying,
For the Fates are captious girls.'*

ATROPOS

*Sisters, I am tired of straying.
Catch the Toy while yet it whirls!
Cleanse the Toy, and end our playing!*

— For the Fates are captious girls.

BOOK THREE

LIBITINA

“ Mort, j'appelle de ta rigueur ”

xvii. ACCORDING TO THEIR FOLLY

"Ce que vous faites-là n'importe pas"

— CHARLES GARNIER

YE THAT made merry through mirthless ages,
And jeered in the thick of the knights' mêlée,
And derided all wrangles of sophists and sages,
And toasted your toes round an auto-da-fé, —
Do ye grieve, in your coffins, now worms assay
That motley logic of quip and pun
And elvish laughter? — or still do ye say,
Whatever ye do there matters to none?

Chuckling and shrugging, ye clutched such wages
As life allotted; then went your way
Into the dark, where no conflict rages,
No wrangles follow, no cruelties stray.
— LE GLORIEUX, ARMSTRONG, PATCH, BRUSQUET,
And SOMMERS! rest ye, for jesting is done,
And ye need not joke now as yesterday,
For whatever ye do there matters to none.

And a dream that he found in his tomb assuages
The brutish sorrows of TRIBOULET;
And DAGONET sleeps, and no more engages
To follow his master in any fray;

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

And CHICOT, too, makes his bed of clay —
Whither wins never the Gascon sun, —
Where baubles and sceptres alike decay,
And whatever ye do there matters to none.

My prince! it is better to quote than obey
The precepts of Solon and Solomon;
Yet the world they admonished is larger than they,
And whatever ye do there matters to none.

XVIII. FOOT-NOTE FOR IDYLS

" Le Sicilien chantait — mais c'est, ma foy, bien drôle "

— THÉODORE PASSERAT

MONGST ALL *immortals tardiest is their tread!*
Dear and desired, they tread with dainty feet,
By whose dear advent all are comforted
'Mongst mortal men! Thus, thus, thy verses greet
The Coming Hours — those Hours that from the heat
And mirth and friendly girls of Sicily,
Unheeding, haled thee to hell's minstrels'-seat,
To edify austere Persephonê.

The living may forget; only the dead
Are hopeless! sang blithe Corydon, where beat
Bright waves upon bright sands, and overhead
Pines murmured benisons. Now is it sweet
To rhyme of this in thy less glad retreat,
THEOCRITUS, who badest that song be
Immortal? and dost thou find that song meet
To edify austere Persephonê.

Now all old hours and all old years are sped,
What profits it with thee if men repeat
Or all or anything thy live lips said?
Thou hast forgot Bombyca's *ivory feet*,

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

The shrill cicalæ's chirp, the lambkins' bleat,
And Lacon's *honeyed song on Helykê*.
What profits thee the honeyed sound of it
To edify austere Persephonê?

Lord of glad songs, for us the winding-sheet,
For thee the funeral pyre — *built near the sea*, —
Bids singing cease, and songless lips compete
To edify austere Persephonê.

XIX. THE GOD-FATHER

"Primus in orbe deos fecit timor; ardua cælo"

— PETRONIUS ARBITER

ALWAYS was fear the god's ambassador,
Since first in traverse of high-tumbling seas
Man quailed and out of thunderings made Thor;
Or mid the desert's dumb infinities
He shuddered, dreaming of Tanit and the Sphinx;
Or noting life's large cruelty, surmised
Plethoric Zeus, with twinkling eyes that roam
Alcmena-ward. — Still as man fears, man thinks;
And presently each dread is canonized,
And duly terror is wheedled and exorcised,
And given his priest, and shrine, and hecatomb.

Fearing, we loathe, and to the thing abhorred
Bow down; and terror and fancy beget a god
A while evaded, and a while adored,
And afterward bemocked. As with a rod
Time smote the lords of Nineveh and Khem,
And raised the dreams which Hellas deemed divine;
As presently the grosser gods of Rome
Turned ghost, and Saturn's pilfered diadem

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Rolled at Christ's bleeding feet. — What praise was
thine

That art most feared of all? what gilded shrine,
Cajoling priest, and steaming hecatomb?

Scant need to wheedle Death! men said. Our life,
With all the pain and passion of the whole,
With all the toil, and sorrow and the strife,
Is but a passing onward to the goal
Where Death awaits us. Mid his votaries
Our birth-cry ranked us; nor may any art
Avail to save us, while the years consume
As ashes smoulder when their fervor dies
Insensibly; and he that lies apart
In darkness hears the pulsing of Death's heart,
And knows that Death waits near him in the gloom.

Yea, of all gods thou only lovest not gifts!
Others we placate; or in smiting we
Evade them. When thou smitest with what shifts
May we evade thee? or how placate thee?
Thou wilt not hearken to any prayer of ours;
Thou biddest emperors and popes as well
As witless clowns, *Be still and bide thy fate!* —
Whose altar we have wreathed with fitting flowers —
With purple lupine, crumpled poppy-bell,
Ambiguous mandrake, and pale asphodel, —
Since praise thee or blame thee, thou art obdurate.

LIBITINA

And nor to wheedle thee, nor to demand
Favor of thee or any pity of thee,
We come. Beneath a lifted sword we stand
And praise thee, knowing, whatever gods may be,
Thy altar is not shaken: though the creeds
And outworn faiths of dreaming seer and priest
Endure, as sinister shadows, or endure
As marsh-fires glittering round a path that leads
Nowhither; and the night be, and the east
Sleep, and the sun not waken; — yet at least,
Though all things else be doubtful, death is sure.

We praise thee, knowing how vainly fancy spans
With timorous dreams the grave's unplumbed abyss.
Vainly we famed the calm Olympians,
And vainly Ammon-Ra, and Artemis,
And Neith, and Krishna. Comfort we have had
Of kindlier lords whose fabled potency
With shadows decked the darkness lest the dread
Of darkness absolute should drive us mad, —
But Time discrowns them. Time endures. But he
Discrowns thee never, and endures by thee
Endured, against that time when Time be dead.

xx. BALLAD OF THE DESTROYER

"Ainsi nous applaudons la mort, la mort qui vient"

— NICOLAS DE CAEN

WE LAUD him thus, that comes unto the king,
And lightly plucks him from the cushioned throne;
And drown his glory and his warfaring
In unrecorded dim oblivion;
And girds another with the sword thereof;
And sets another in his stead to reign;
And ousts the remnant, nakedly to gain
Styx' formless shore and nakedly complain
Midst twittering ghosts lamenting life and love.

For Death is merciless: a crack-brained king
He raises in the place of Prester John,
Smites Priam, and mid-course in conquering
Bids Cæsar pause; the wit of Solomon,
The wealth of Nero and the pride thereof,
And battle-prowess — or of Tamburlaine,
Darius, Jeshua, or Charlemaigne, —
Wheedle and bribe and surfeit Death in vain,
And get no grace of him nor any love.

LIBITINA

Incuriously he smites the armored king
And tricks his counsellors; — as, later on,
Death will, half-idly, still our pleasuring,
And change for fevered laughter in the sun
Sleep such as Merlin's, — and excess thereof, —
Whence we, divorceless Death our Viviane
Implacable, may never more regain
The unforgotten rapture, and the pain
And grief and ecstasy of life and love.

For, presently, as quiet as the king
Sleeps now that planned the keeps of Ilion,
We, too, will sleep, whilst overhead the spring
Rules, and young lovers laugh — as we have done, —
And kiss — as we, that take no heed thereof,
But slumber very soundly, and disdain
The world-wide heralding of winter's wane
And swift sweet ripple of the April rain
Running about the world to waken love.

We shall have done with love, and Death be king
And turn our nimble bodies carrion,
Our red lips dusty; — yet our live lips cling
Despite that age-long severance, and are one
Despite the grave and the vain grief thereof, —
Which we will baffle, if in Death's domain
Fond memories may enter, and we twain
May dream a little, and rehearse again
In that unending sleep our present love.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Speed forth to her in halting unison,
My rhymes; and say no hindrance may restrain
Love from his aim when Love is bent thereon;
Yea, say to her, though Death now said, *Refrain,*
Lest I exact life's instant end thereof,
I know that even as the weather-vane
Follows the wind so would I follow Love.

XXI. EXHORTATION TOWARD ALMSGIVING

"Fausse beauté, qui tant me couste cher"

— FRANÇOIS VILLON

O BEAUTY OF her, whereby I am undone!
O grace of her, that hath no grace for me!
O Love of her, the bit that guides me on
To sorrow and to grievous misery!
O felon Charms, my poor heart's enemy!
O furtive murderous Pride! O pitiless, great,
Cold Eyes of her! have done with cruelty!
Have pity upon me ere it be too late!

Happier for me if elsewhere I had gone
For pity, — ah, far happier for me,
Since never of her may any grace be won,
And lest dishonor slay me, I must flee.
Haro! I cry, (and cry how uselessly!)
Haro! I cry to folk of all estate,
For I must die unless it chance that she
Have pity upon me ere it be too late.

M'amy, that day in whose disastrous sun
Your beauty's flower must fade and wane and be
No longer beautiful, draws near, — whereon
I will nor plead nor mock; — not I, for we

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Shall both be old and vigorless! M'amy,
Drink deep of love, drink deep, nor hesitate
Until the spring run dry, but speedily
Have pity upon me — ere it be too late!

Lord Love, that all love's lordship hast in fee,
Lighten, ah, lighten thy displeasure's weight,
For all true hearts should, of Christ's charity,
Have pity upon me ere it be too late.

XXII. COMFORT FOR CENTENARIANS

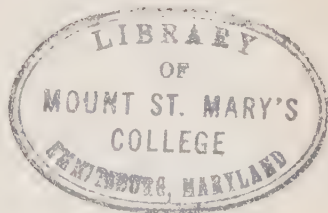
— After NICOLAS DE CAEN

MARVEL NOT if my words are bold;
Though the sound be rude, yet the sense is true:
Too long you have flouted a tale oft-told
By the stammering tongues of men that woo,
And woo you vainly. Your brain is askew
For pride in your body's magnificence,
And its color and curving so fair to view; —
And what will it matter a hundred years hence?

My burden, I grant you, is blunt and old:
Yet time will sharpen its sting when you —
Even you yourself! — and the things you hold
At so dear a price are a bone or two;
And those wonderful eyes, whose heaven-like blue
Is the crown of your beauty's excellence,
Are unsavory holes that a worm crawls through; —
And what will it matter a hundred years hence?

Encrusted and tainted with churchyard mould,
Your dear perfections must lie perdue;
Take on such favor as few behold
With liking, and certainly none pursue;

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FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

And your beauty be reft of all revenue,
And suffer the blind worm's insolence,
Who recks not at all of height, hair and hue, —
And what will it matter a hundred years hence?

ETTARRE, I proffer my love anew,
And life with a jest at the world's expense;
And if for your favor I vainly sue —
Why, what will it matter a hundred years hence?

XXIII. THE CONQUEROR PASSES

"Non dormatz plus! les messatges de doux pascor"

— RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS

AWAKEN! FOR the servitors of Spring
Proclaim his triumph! ah, make haste to see
With what tempestuous pageantry they bring
The victor homeward! haste, for this is he
That cast out Winter, and all woes that cling
To Winter's garments, and bade April be!

And now that Spring is master, let us be
Content, and laugh as anciently in spring
The battle-wearied Tristran laughed, when he
Was come again Tintagel-ward, to bring
Glad news of Arthur's victory — and see
Ysoude, with parted lips, that waver and cling.

Not yet in Brittany must Tristran cling
To this or that sad memory, and be
Alone, as she in Cornwall; for in spring
Love sows against far harvestings, — and he
Is blind, and scatters baleful seed that bring
Such fruitage as blind Love lacks eyes to see.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Love sows, but lovers reap: and ye will see
The loved eyes lighten, feel the loved lips cling,
Never again when in the grave ye be
Incurious of your happiness in spring,
And get no grace of Love there, whither he
That bartered life for love no love may bring.

No braggart Heracles avails to bring
Alcestis hence; nor here may Roland see
The eyes of Aude; nor here the wakening spring
Vex any man with memories: for there be
No memories that cling as cerements cling,
No force that baffles Death, more strong than he.

Us hath he noted, and for us hath he
An hour appointed; and that hour will bring
Oblivion. — Then laugh! Laugh, dear, and see
The tyrant mocked, while yet our bosoms cling,
While yet our lips obey us, and we be
Untrammelled in our little hour of spring!

Thus in the spring we jeer at Death, though he
Will see our children perish, and will bring
Asunder all that cling while love may be.

XXIV. THE MENDICANTS

"Domna, de totz bos aïps complida"

— RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS

O MADAM DESTINY, omnipotent,
Be not too obdurate to us who pray
That this our transient grant of youth be spent
In laughter as befits a holiday, —
From which the evening summons us away,
From which to-morrow wakens us to strife
And toil and grief and wisdom, — and to-day
Grudge us not life!

O Madam Destiny, omnipotent,
Why need our elders trouble us at play?
We know that very soon we shall repent
The idle follies of our holiday,
And being old, shall be as wise as they:
But now we are not wise, and lute and fife
Plead sweetlier than axioms, — so to-day
Grudge us not life!

O Madam Destiny, omnipotent,
You have given us youth — and must we cast away
The cup undrained and our one coin unspent
Because our elders' beards and hearts are gray?

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

They have forgotten that if we delay
Death claps us on the shoulder, and with knife
Or cord or fever, flouts the prayer we pray —
Grudge us not life!

Madam, recall that in the sun we play
But for an hour, then have the worm for wife,
The tomb for habitation, — and to-day
Grudge us not life!

BOOK FOUR

HORTENSIS

“Dedans le boys je m'en allay”

xxv. ALONE IN APRIL

"In un boschetto trovai pastorella"

—? GUERZO DI MONTECANTI

RUSTLING LEAVES of the willow-tree
Peering downward at you and me,
And no man else in the world to see.

Only the birds, whose dusty coats
Show dark in the green — whose throbbing throats
Turn joy to music and love to notes.

Lean your body against the tree,
Lifting your red lips up to me,
Ettarre, and kiss, with no man to see!

And let us laugh for a little. — Yea,
Let love and laughter herald the day
When laughter and love will be put away.

Then you will remember the willow-tree
And this very hour, and remember me,
Ettarre, — whose face you will no more see!

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

So swift, so swift the glad time goes,
And Eld and Death with their countless woes
Draw near, and the end thereof no man knows.

Lean your body against the tree,
Lifting your red lips up to me,
Ettarre, and kiss, with no man to see!

XXVI. "— BUT WISDOM IS JUSTIFIED OF HER
CHILDREN "

"Oramai quando flore"

— ALESSANDRO DE MEDICI

PHYLLIDA, SPRING wakes about us —
Wakes to mock at us and flout us
That so coldly do delay:
When the very birds are mating,
Pray you, why should we be waiting —
We that might be wed to-day?

Life is brief, the wise men tell us; —
Even those dusty, musty fellows
That have done with life, — and pass
Where the wraith of Aristotle
Hankers, vainly, for a bottle,
Youth and some frank Grecian lass.

Ah, I warrant you; — and Zeno
Would not reason, now, could he know
One more chance to live and love:
For, at best, the merry May-time
Is a very fleeting playtime; —
Why, then, waste an hour thereof?

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Plato, Solon, Periander,
Seneca, Anaximander,
Pyrrho, and Parmenides!
Were one hour alone remaining
Would ye spend it in attaining
Learning, or to lips like these?

Thus, I demonstrate by reason
Now is our predestined season
For the garnering of all bliss;
Prudence is but long-faced folly;
Cry a fig for melancholy!
Seal the bargain with a kiss.

xxvii. THE LOVERS' DOXOLOGY

"O voi che per la via d'amor passate"

— ALESSANDRO DE MEDICI

LISTEN, ALL lovers! the spring is here,
And the world is not amiss;
As long as laughter is good to hear,
And lips are good to kiss, —
As long as Youth and Spring endure, —
There is never an evil past a cure,
And the world is never amiss.

O lovers all, I bid ye declare
The world is a pleasant place; —
Give thanks to God for the gift so fair,
Give thanks for His singular grace!
Give thanks for Youth and Love and Spring!
Give thanks, as gentlefolk should, and sing,
The world is a pleasant place!

XXVIII. OF ANNUAL MAGIC: AT TWENTY

"Be m play lo dous temp de pascor"

— RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS

NOW I loiter, and dream to the branches' swaying
In furtive conference, — high overhead, —
A-tingle with rumors that Winter is sped
And over his ruins a world goes maying.

Somewhere — impressively, — people are saying
Intelligent things (which their grandmothers said),
While I loiter, and dream to the branches' swaying
In furtive conference, high overhead.

Here the hand of April, unwashed from slaying
Earth's fallen tyrant — for Winter is dead, —
Uncloses anemones, staining them red;
And her daffodils guard me, in squads, — displaying
Intrepid lances lest wisdom tread
Where I loiter and dream to the branches' swaying.

xxix. OF ANNUAL MAGIC: AT TWENTY-FIVE

"Quant erba vertz e fuelha par"

— RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS

APRIL WAKES, and the gifts are good
Which April grants in this lonely wood,
Mid the wistful sounds of a solitude
Whose immemorial murmuring
Is the voice of Spring
And murmurs the burden of burgeoning.

April wakes, and her heart is high,
For the Bassarids and the Fauns are nigh,
And prosperous leaves lisp busily
Over fluttered brakes, whence the breezes bring
Vext twittering
To swell the burden of burgeoning.

April wakes, and afield, astray,
She calls to whom at the end I say,
Heart o' My Heart, I am thine alway, —
And I follow, follow her carolling,
For I hear her sing
Above the burden of burgeoning.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

April wakes; — it were good to live
(*Yet April passes*), though April give
No other gift for our pleasuring
Than the old, old burden of burgeoning.

xxx. OF ANNUAL MAGIC: AT TWENTY-EIGHT

"Era m requier sa custum'e son us pascor"

— RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS

MAY shows with godlike showing
To-day for each that sees
May's magic overthrowing
All musty memories
In him whom May decrees
To be love's own. He saith,
I wear love's liveries
Until released by death.

Thus all we laud May's sowing,
Nor heed how harvests please
When nowhere grain worth growing
Greets autumn's questing breeze,
And garnerers garner these —
Vain words and wasted breath
And spilth and tasteless lees, —
Until released by death.

Unwillingly foreknowing
That love with May-time flees,

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

We take this day's bestowing,
And feed on fantasies
Such as love lends for ease
Where none but travaileth,
With lean infrequent fees,
Until released by death.

xxxI. OF ANNUAL MAGIC: AT THIRTY

"Ai! chant d'auzel comensa sa sazoz"

— RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS

NOW MAY awakes, and spring comes back;
Now green fire creeps from tree to tree,
And he that travels need not lack
The sight of an anemone
'Twixt one sea and another sea;
Now blithe birds build, and wan hearts quicken,
Oblivious of dreams that sicken
Drear ice-engirdled reverie.

Now I in part forget . . . recall
In part . . . how yonder throstle's call
Inveigles whither mirth is, —
Because so many lips have told
The tale I told, once, who am old,
However young all earth is.

xxxii. THE DOTARD CONJURER

"Le Printemps est devenu comme un sorcier faible"

— PAUL VERVILLE

SPRING is become a dotard conjurer,
And his old magic works not any more!
No more avails the whisper of friendly leaves;
And now the forest is undenized
Of daydreams, which, like elfin outlaws, once
Lay hid in wait for every passer-by
And pilfered all his sorrows; dawn abates
In wonder and tells flatly, *It is day*,
And tells no more than that now; and the night
Brews no more philtres; and the moon forgets
That ancient wizardry which once was hers.

Ah, the old magic works not any more,
Though I have known its potency. Perchance,
Somewhere a great way off, in Avalon,
Atlantis, or the hushed Hesperides,
Hearts lighten with the coming in of spring,
Even as once. Yes, for this thing has been,
And may be yet in far-off Avalon.

HORTENSIS

For it may be in far-off Avalon,
Even as once — was it not yesterday? —
All forests are akin to Brocelaunde,
And fear and beauty keep their heritage
And breathe of something hidden in the woods
Save birds, and trees, and flowers, and ravenous gnats, —
For they are haunted by those messengers
That April sends about our woods no more
On primal errands. But in Avalon,
Fern-carpeted untroubled Avalon,
When April wakes and rises, with wind-blown hair
And steadfast eyes — when at the tip of the world
The sun takes heart a little, — then sturdy April
Exults, and summons tricky ministers
To color and flaunt in low, yet-dreaming fields
The first flush of the apple-blossoms; and marshal
The stout spears of the daffodils; and guide
Frail baby clouds about the lonely heavens;
And polish frost-nipped stars; and re-awaken
Warm gracious land-winds where the restive waters
Shout to the glistening sands and hunger all night
With impotent desire of the naked moon.

Yes; this may be, in far-off Avalon.

Here the old magic works not any more:
And Spring, a dotard conjurer, forgets
The runes and sorceries of yesterday,
And may at best evoke but tenuous visions, —

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Faint-hearted dreams that people the turbid past
With half-seen faces and derisive laughter; —
And there is nothing hidden in the woods
Save birds, and trees, and flowers, and ravenous gnats,
And, under all, dead and decaying leaves.

*Nay, under all, dead and decaying leaves
Enrich that mould which bred them, and whereby
The tree is nourished and new leaves put forth.*

BOOK FIVE

MELÆNIS

“ De moy, pauvre, je veuil parler ”

•

xxxiii. UNCHARTED

"Un beau royaume nous cherchons"

— ANTOINE RICZI

T HERE is a land those hereabout
Ignore. . . Its gates are barred
By Titan twins, named Fear and Doubt.
These mercifully guard
That land we seek — the land so fair! —
And all the fields thereof,
Where daffodils flaunt everywhere
And ouzels chant of love, —
Lest we attain the Middle-Land,
Whence clouded well-springs rise,
And vipers from a slimy strand
Lift glittering cold eyes.

NOW, THE PARABLE ALL MAY UNDERSTAND,
AND SURELY YOU KNOW THE NAME OF THE LAND!
AH, NEVER A GUIDE OR EVER A CHART
MAY SAFELY LEAD YOU ABOUT THIS LAND, —
THE LAND OF THE HUMAN HEART!

xxxiv. SCHOOL-SONG

"Je fais attention aux maîtres"

— ALPHONSE MOREAU

I HAVE to heed my teachers,
And try to trust my school,
And yet no less, through awkwardness,
Infringe on every rule.

Dim laws I may not understand
I strive to keep — and break,
Somehow, I see forbidden me
Much that I want — and take
Sometimes, — not meaning to do wrong,
Nor meaning to deny
Due weight to rules one ridicules
Somewhat, yet lives thereby.

If teachers could but recollect
The lads they used to be,
I think that all could half-recall,
Somewhere, someone like me,
(*The lads they were!* What looking-glass
Shows me a lad to-day?
With little learned, much half-discerned,
I toil already gray).

MELÆNIS

Yet honor, ruefully, the rule —
All teachers must be sure
That each mistake their pupils make
Was never made before:
And honor, tacitly, the rule —
No pupil ever thrives
Who questions *Why?* of laws whereby
We lead our ordered lives.

*For we must heed our teachers,
And try to trust our school,
Until they teach the reason each
Infringes every rule.*

xxxv. "AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING —"

— After NICOLAS DE CAEN

MAN'S LOVE hath many prompters,
But a woman's love hath none;
And he may woo a nimble wit
Or hair that shames the sun,
Whilst she must pick of all one man
And ever brood thereon, —
And for no reason,
And not rightly, —

Save that the plan was foreordained
(More old than Chalcedon,
Or any tower of Tarshish
Or of gleaming Babylon),
That she must love unwillingly
And love till life be done, —
He for a season,
And more lightly.

xxxvi. BALLAD OF THE DOUBLE-SOUL

"Les Dieux, qui trop aiment ses facéties cruelles"

— PAUL VERVILLE

IN THE beginning the Gods made man, and fashioned the
sky and the sea,
And the earth's fair face for man's dwelling-place; and
this was the Gods' decree:—

*Lo, we have given to man five wits: he discerneth folly
and sin;*

*He is swift to deride all the world outside, and blind to the
world within:*

*So that man may make sport and amuse us, in battling for
phrases or pelf,*

*Now that each may know what forebodeth woe to his neigh-
bor, and not to himself.*

Yet some have the Gods forgotten, — or is it that subtler
mirth

The Gods extort of a certain sort of folk that cumber the
earth?

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

FOR THIS IS THE SONG OF THE DOUBLE-SOUL, DISTORTEDLY
TWO IN ONE, —
OF THE WEARIED EYES THAT STILL BEHOLD THE FRUIT
ERE THE SEED BE SOWN,
AND DERIVE AFFRIGHT FOR THE NEARING NIGHT FROM
THE LIGHT OF THE NOONTIDE SUN.

For, one that with hope in the morning set forth, and knew
never a fear,
They have linked with another whom omens bother; and
he whispers in one's ear.

And one is fain to be climbing where only angels have
trod,
But is fettered and tied to another's side who fears that it
might look odd.
And one would worship a woman whom all perfections
dower,
But the other smiles at transparent wiles; and he quotes
his Schopenhauer.

Thus two by two we wrangle and blunder about the
earth,
And that body we share we may not spare; but the Gods
have need of mirth.

SO THIS IS THE SONG OF THE DOUBLE-SOUL, DISTORTEDLY
TWO IN ONE, —

MELÆNIS

OF THE WEARIED EYES THAT STILL BEHOLD THE FRUIT
ERE THE SEED BE SOWN,
AND DERIVE AFFRIGHT FOR THE NEARING NIGHT FROM
THE LIGHT OF THE NOONTIDE SUN.

XXXVII. WHEN TRAVELLERS RETURN

— A fancy from ALPHONSE MOREAU

THERE is more in this room than is corporal, —
Grieved, silent, and striving in nameless ways,
While I read, with my back against the wall,
And nothing happens, and naught betrays
Unseen sad eyes that are weighing me
Somehow.

They trouble me, too, although
By rule and reason this should not be . . .

But a woman died here, years ago,
Who loved me much: — and what if the dead
Were doomed to this as their punishment —
That with those whom, living, they loved they tread
Forever, and are omniscient?

xxxviii. ANNALS

§ I — "QUIS DESIDERIO?"

(May 15th, 1913)

T HERE is no room for grief when harvest nears
And, labor done, fit wages are received, —
No room for grief now that she wins full-sheaved
Her harvest, and no need of any tears.
She goes to garner honorable years;
She was a little wearied by long strife,
And still alert, and still in love with life —
As ever — would ascend to her compeers.

There is no room for grief; as to its nest
A seabird moves on pinions sure and strong,
Her sturdy spirit mounts when sturdiest,
And life ends nobly like a rounded song.
There is no room for grief; she is at rest
To whom rest was a stranger overlong.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

§ 2 — “ SED RISIT MIDAS ”

(1915: Somewhere in the United States)

Let all I touch be gold! King Midas cried
Of old in Phrygia. Jove heard the prayer,
And Midas laughed; for gold gleamed everywhere
His fingers reached; and iron gleamed outside.

Within, no friendly handclasp might abide
That touch which turned all gold, and made his food
Chill metal on his lips; chill amplitude
Derided him. So Midas laughed, and died.

To-day who follows Midas? . . . *Nay, let be
To whisper of lost friends I knew of old
When England gave me life which France made free!
I trade unbiased; and my guns are sold —
Whoever buys, — now all need buy of me,
And all I touch or handle turns to gold!*

§ 3 — “ APRILIS GESTA ”

(Easter, 1865 — Easter, 1915: Richmond-in-Virginia)

*A long half-century since when April reigned,
As now, our cause was lost because unjust —
Else wherefore lost? — when level with the dust
Fell citadels our fathers' faith maintained*

MELÆNIS

Till that old April, — hath the fool ordained,
Imprisoned by his bookshelves; and forgets
Truth is not lightly slain with bayonets,
Or warfare lost whence honor comes unstained.

And April craved her jest ere time began, —
So time anew brings April, to deride
More changeful, strife-drowned Earth, wherein to span
The surge of war's inexorable tide
Attends the wit of a Virginian,
And men acclaim the Christ men crucified.

§ 4 — “LEX SCRIPTA EST”

(February 14th, 1916)

Time rounds a twelvemonth since you died, — most dear
And brave of women! — and he thrives as yet
Whose craven heart found courage to beget
The lie that slew you; — who, with fame made clear
And past his poison, rest till High God hear
Our prayer, and smite with godlike plenitude
This lean gray snake, and spill the venom spewed
In vain to guard his lewd blood-brother's bier.

Not yet — most dear and brave! — may faith foretell
Fate's fixed inevitable hour, nor be

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Rewarded by its advent, to compel
This liar's exile from all less vile than he,
And startle in the loneliest nook of hell
Iscariot and Cain with company.

XXXIX. "— AND EVER SHALL BE "

— After ALPHONSE MOREAU

SAD HOURS and glad hours, and all hours, pass over;
One thing unshaken stays:
Life, that hath Death for spouse, hath Chance for lover;
Whereby decays

Each thing save one thing: — mid this strife diurnal
Of hourly change begot,
Love, that is God-born, bides as God eternal,
And changes not; —

Nor means a tinselled dream pursuing lovers
Find altered by and by,
When, with possession, time anon discovers
Trapped dreams must die, —

For he that visions God, of mankind gathers
One manlike trait alone,
And reverently imputes to Him a father's
Love for his son.

XL. THE PERFECT REASON

“ *Le Roy Jésus crucifié* ”

— ANTOINE RICZI

KING JESUS hung upon the Cross,
And have ye sinned? — quo’ He, —
Nay, Dysmas, ’tis no honest loss
When Satan cogs the dice ye toss,
And thou shalt sup with Me, —
Sedebis apud angelos,
Quia amavisti!

At Heaven’s Gate was Heaven’s Queen,
And have ye sinned? — quo’ She, —
And would I hold him worth a bean
That durst not seek, because unclean,
My cleansing charity? —
Speak thou, that wast the Magdalene,
Quia amavisti!

BOOK SIX

SCOTEIA

“ Or il et mort, passé trente ans ”

XLI. TWO IN TWILIGHT

"Ave, Maria, que l'amour Divine inspire"

— ANTOINE RICZI

§ I — ALBA

AVE, MARIA! *whom Love did move
To triumph over earthly love.*

Mother and Maid, now that wan stars take flight,
And larks with song assail high heaven's height,
Unwillingly we lose the kindly night
That sheltered us when we were fain thereof.

For we are frail, and know not of His aim,
Yet Whosoever made us — were His name
Jove or Jehovah, — should we dare to blame
Our Maker that He made us fit for love? —

Were we not modeled by an Artizan
That to His liking shaped the soul of man,
And fashioned all things after His own plan,
Divulging nothing of the aims thereof? —

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Is it by His grace we grow adventurous,
And, laughing, say: — *Love proves victorious, —*
Who made love potent? if love hoodwink us
How may we dare reprove Him that made love?

MATER, ORA FILIUM,
UT POST HOC EXILIUM
NOBIS DONET GAUDIUM
BEATORUM OMNIUM!

§ 2 — SERENA

Ave, Maria! now cry we so
That see night wake and daylight go.

Mother and Maid, in nothing incomplete,
This night that gathers is more light and fleet
Than life's long twilight trod with stumbling feet,
Agentes semper uno animo.

Ever we touch the prize we dare not take!
Ever we know that thirst we dare not slake!
Yet ever to a dreamed-of goal we make —
Est tui cœli in palatio!

Long, long the road, and set with many a snare;
And to how small sure knowledge are we heir
That blindly tread, with twilight everywhere!
Volo in toto; sed non valeo!

SCOTEIA

Long, long the road, and very frail are we,
That may not lightly curb mortality,
Nor lightly tread together steadfastly,
Et parvum carmen unum facio: —

MATER, ORA FILIUM,
UT POST HOC EXILIUM
NOBIS DONET GAUDIUM
BEATORUM OMNIUM!

XLII. "IN FINE, —"

GOOD AND *evil, blending, —*
Everywhere men say, —
Obscurely work at sending
Rewards on Judgment Day.

Good and evil, blending, —
Elsewhere others bray, —
Take no thought of ending,
Keep no ordered way, —
Eternally at play,
Aim but at interplaying. . .

Thirdly, some offend
Ineffably by saying,
Not without shrugs, *My friend,*
Good and evil blend.

XLIII. STY-SONG

— After NICOLAS DE CAEN

AS WITH her dupes dealt Circê,
Life deals with hers, for she
Reshapes them without mercy,
And shapes them swinishly,
To wallow swinishly,
And for eternity; —

Though, harder than the witch was,
Life, changing not the whole,
Transmutes the body, which was
Proud garment of the soul,
And briefly drugs the soul,
Whose ruin is her goal; —

And means by this thereafter
A subtler mirth to get,
And mock with bitterer laughter
Her helpless dupes' regret,
Their swinish dull regret
For what they half forget.

XLIV. THE TOY-MAKER

FROM THE dawn of the day to the dusk he toiled,
Shaping fanciful playthings with tireless hands, —
Useless trumpery toys; and, with vaulting heart,
Gave them unto all peoples — who mocked at him,
Trampled on them, and soiled them, and went their way.

Then he toiled from the morn to the dusk again,
Gave his gimcracks to people who mocked at him,
Trampled on them, deriding, and went their way.

Thus he labors, and loudly they jeer at him; —
That is, when they remember he still exists.

Who, you ask, is this fellow? — What matter names?
He is only a scribbler who is content.

XLV. THE CASTLE OF CONTENT

— PROVENÇAL BURDEN

THROUGH THE mist of years does it gleam as yet —
That fair and free extent
Of moonlit turret and parapet,
Which castled, once, Content?

*Ei ho! Ei ho! the Castle of Content,
With drowsy music drowning merriment
Where Dreams and Visions held high carnival,
And frolicking frail Loves made light of all, —
Ei ho! the vanished Castle of Content!*

Such toll we took of his niggling Hours
That the troops of Time were sent
To seize the treasures and fell the towers
Of the Castle of Content.

*Ei ho! Ei ho! the Castle of Content,
With flaming roof and tumbling battlement
Where Time hath conquered, and the firelight streams
Above sore-wounded Loves and dying Dreams, —
Ei ho! the vanished Castle of Content!*

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

The towers are fallen; no laughter rings
Through the rafters, charred and rent;
The ruin is wrought of all goodly things
In the Castle of Content.

*Ei ho! Ei ho! the Castle of Content,
Despoiled and desolate! Where mirth was meant,
All turns to grieving now; and now in vain
Hand-shadowed eyes drift youthward — to regain
Disastrous memories of that dear domain.
Ei ho! the vanished Castle of Content!*

XLVI. THE PARODIST

— After PAUL VERVILLE

I HEAR PROUD singing at times;
And when that singing is ended
I mimic, with arduous rhymes,
A song which I knew to be splendid,
And make of what I comprehended —
I singly, — a thing so absurd
That rightly is reason offended.

What matter? — My rhymes are blurred
Because I wept when I heard
Proud singing whereof these rhymes
Iterate never a word;
And safely I treasure the times
Wherein is a song that climbs,
And my heart singly is stirred.

XLVII. THE DARK COMPANION

" Nous sommes unités à cette fin "

— CHARLES GARNIER

I AND MY SHADOW ARE SO MADE ONE
THAT WERE WE PARTED EACH LIFE WERE DONE.

Throughout the flight of the blithe bright day
Always he follows me, doggedly;
But I need not heed him, — because my way
Is flecked with sunlight, — and shrug to see
How fondly my Shadow follows me.

When dying day grows chill and stark,
And vigilant stars troop each to his place,
He rises, — being free in the dark,
He rises and grins, — being freed for a space,
He rises to talk with me face to face.

Then he tells me of much I am loth to hear,
For he whispers of all that we two have seen,
And loved, and squandered. *At forty year,*
My master, how wide is the gulf between
That which we are and what might have been!

SCOTEIA

And he whispers of dreams that the years degrade,
And of lust made lord over love's demesne,
And of chances wasted, and faith betrayed.
My master, how wide is the gulf between
That which we are and what might have been!

Even thus he whispers; and he and I
Sit thus, alone, till the night's defeat
Is signaled eastward, and chance thereby
Wins room for a morrow, fair and fleet,
That finds my Shadow beneath my feet.

I AND MY SHADOW ARE SO MADE ONE
THAT WERE WE PARTED EACH LIFE WERE DONE.

XLVIII. SEA-SCAPES

I LIE AND dream in the soft warm sand; and the thunder
and surge and the baffled roar
Of the sea's relentless and vain endeavors are a pleasant
lullaby, here on shore.

Since a little hillock screens yonder ageless tenacious bat-
tlings (which shatter, and pass
In foam and spume), I appraise, half-nodding, much sand
and sky and gaunt nodding grass.

And I am content to lie and dream; and I am too drowsy
to rise, and see
If it be worth breasting — that ocean yonder, which a little
hillock hides from me.

BOOK SEVEN
VERTICORDIA

"A vous parle, compains de galles"

XLIX. THE AGELESS MAID

"Amors, qu'a escien m'a donat tal voler"

— RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS

MAN'S LOVE, that leads me day by day
Through many a screened and scented way,
Finds to assuage my thirst
No love that may the old love slay,
None sweeter than the first.

Fond heart of mine, that beats so fast
As this or that fair maid trips past,
Once, and with lesser stir,
We viewed the grace of love, at last,
And turned idolater.

Lad's Love it was, that in the spring
When all things woke to blossoming,
Was as a child that came
Laughing, and filled with wondering,
Nor knowing his own name.

And still — whatever years impend
To witness time a fickle friend
And youth a dwindling fire, —
I must adore, till all years end,
My first love, Heart's Desire.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

I may not hear men speak of her
Unmoved, and vagrant pulses stir
To greet her passing-by,
And I, in all her worshipper,
Must serve her till I die.

For I remember: this is she
That reigns in one man's memory
Immune to age and fret,
And stays the maid I may nor see
Nor win to, nor forget.

L. FROM AFAR

" Domna, si no us vexon mei heulh "

— RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS

§ I

FÉLISE, WHOSE will, yet undiscerned, commands
My willing heart, stayest thou unmoved to see
How Love, forlorn and reft of empery,
Strains toward thy free heart with bleeding hands?
Now the last hour of day runs leaden sands
Hast thou indeed, Félise, no thought of me,
As all my thoughts take wing and throng to thee
Athwart the long leagues of dividing lands?

Félise, I am long sick with long delay,
Brain-wearied with long dreaming of thy grace,
Heart-hungered with long waiting, in this place
Of days that are so long, — whilst Love's own day,
Longed-for so long, draws on with leisured pace
To make thee mine, dear love so far away.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

§ 2

Félice, have pity! — cringing, at thy door
Entreats, with dolorous cry and clamoring,
That mendicant who quits thee nevermore:
Now winter chills the world, and no birds sing
In any woods, yet as in wanton spring
He follows thee; and never will have done,
Though nakedly he die, from following
Whither thou leadest.

Canst thou look upon
His woes, and laugh to see a goddess' son
Of wide dominion, and in strategy
More strong than Jove, more wise than Solomon,
Thus beggared and betricked, at last, by thee?
Félice, have pity! love, let Love be one
Among the folk that bear thee company.

LI. COMPETITORS

— After ALESSANDRO DE MEDICI

HEART o' MY HEART, dost thou not hear
Tired waves, perturbed by the mystery
Of the voiding east where vexed winds veer,
Lamenting and lisping? — *I, the Sea,*
Grapple and strain till I win to thee
I have loved so long, and may never depart
From that age-long siege till I win to thee,
Though I win as Enipëus, Heart o' My Heart.

Heart o' My Heart, dost thou not hear
A sighing of dying Winds? — crying to thee: —
We that were friendly with Guenevere,
And wafted Queen Helen oversea,
And served that lady of mystery
Balkis, a Sheban — caress and depart
Unwillingly, finding none fairer than thee
In those cold old venturings, Heart o' My Heart.

Heart o' My Heart, dost thou not hear
Love that strives — as the yearning Sea,
As the truant Winds, — for the staid, and severe,
And sturdy and stainless heart of thee? —

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Nay, without warning Love wins to thee
Suddenly some day, swift to impart
The secret of tears and the mystery
Of sorrow and heartbreak, Heart o' My Heart.

All sighs and tears are the Winds and the Sea,
And fit precursors — nay, portion and part —
Of Love that is silent, and wins to thee
Silently some day, Heart o' My Heart.

LII. THE STRIKING HOUR

"Comme un Croisé vaincu, qui longtemps languissait"

— NICOLAS DE CAEN

§ I

AS ONE imprisoned, that hath lain alone
And dreamed of sunlight where no vagrant gleam
Of sunlight pierces, being freed, must deem
This too but dreaming, and must dread the sun
Whose glory dazzles; — even as such-an-one
Am I, whose longing was but now supreme
For this high hour, and, now it strikes, esteem
I do but dream long dreamed-of goals are won.

Take heed! be still! lest haply God reprove.
We have climbed too high! Those note us overhead
Who know I am unworthy of your love;
And when yet-parted lips, sigh-visited,
End speech and wait, mine when I will to move,
Such joy awakens that I grow afraid.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

§ 2

Yet I have loved you in so many ways, —
With reverence always, and such purity
As often curbs that which is base in me;
And, though some folly oftentimes betrays
My purpose into naught, through all these days
Till this day I had striven silently
To win at last to what, at least, would be
Earth-staggering homage reverberant in your praise.

To-day in flight from earth-wide dissonance,
I storm your heart, — and claim not any fee
For any service rendered anywhere;
But as one comes to his inheritance,
I cry, *Let enter!* and yet dread to see
You deem me worthy, love, to enter there.

§ 3

Catullus might have made of words that seek
With rippling sound, in soft recurrent ways,
The perfect song, or in remoter days
Theocritus have hymned you in glad Greek;
But I am not as they, — and dare not speak
Of you unworthily, and dare not praise
Perfection with imperfect roundelays,
And desecrate the prize I dare to seek.

VERTICORDIA

I do not woo you, then, by fashioning
Vext analogues 'twixt you and Guenevere;
Nor do I come with agile lips that bring
The sugared periods of a sonneteer,
And bring no more, — but just with lips that cling
To yours, in murmuring, *I love you, dear!*

LIII. LIGHTS OF THE WORLD

— After CHARLES GARNIER

SPEED FORTH, my song, the sun's ambassador,
Lest in the east night prove the conqueror,
And day be slain, and darkness triumph, — for
The sun is single, but her eyes are twain.

And now the sunlight and the night contest
A doubtful battle, and day bides at best
Doubtful, till Phyllis wake. It is attest
The sun is single.

But her eyes are twain, —
And should the light of all the world delay,
And darkness prove victorious? Is it day
Now that the sun alone is risen?

Nay,
The sun is single, but her eyes are twain, —
Twain firmaments that mock with heavenlier hue
The heavens' less lordly and less gracious blue,
And lit with sunlier sunlight through and through.

VERTICORDIA

The sun is single, but her eyes are twain,
And of fair things this side of Paradise
Fairest, of goodly things most goodly.

Rise!

And succor the benighted world that cries,
The sun is single, but her eyes are twain!

LIV. "—OF ANISE AND CUMMIN ALSO"

—After NICOLAS DE CAEN

IT is in vain I mirror forth the praise
In pondered virelais
Of her that is the lady of my love;
Far-sought and curious phrases fail to tell
The tender miracle
Of her white body and the grace thereof.

Thus many and many an artful-artless strain
Is fashioned all in vain:
Sound proves unsound; and even her name, that is
To me more glorious than the glow of fire
Or dawn or love's desire
Or opals interlinked with turquoises,
Mocks utterance.

So, lacking skill to praise
That perfect bodily beauty which is hers,
— So, as old worshippers
That came with offerings of honey and maize,

VERTICORDIA

Their rustic all, where choirs and presbyters
Praised Eryx' Queen, — so, have I given her these
My faltering melodies,
That are Love's lean and ragged messengers.

LV. "SWEET ADELAIS"

— After RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS

HAD you lived when earth was new
What had bards of old to do
Save to sing in praise of you?

Had you lived in ancient days,
Adelais, sweet Adelais,
You had all the ancients' praise, —
You whose beauty would have won
Canticles of Solomon,
Had the sage Judean king
Gazed upon this goodliest thing
Earth of Heaven's grace hath got.

Had you gladdened Greece, were not
All the nymphs of Greece forgot?

Had you trod Sicilian ways,
Adelais, sweet Adelais,
You had pilfered all their praise:
Bion and Theocritus
Had transmitted unto us

VERTICORDIA

Honeyed harmonies to tell
Of your beauty's miracle,
Delicate, desirable,
And their singing skill were bent
You-ward tenderly, — content,
While the world slipped by, to gaze
On the grace of you, and praise
Sweet Adelaïs.

Had you lived in Roman times
No Catullus in his rhymes
Had lamented Lesbia's sparrow!
He had praised your forehead, narrow
As the newly-crescent moon,
White as apple-trees in June;
He had made some amorous tune
Of the laughing light Erôs
Snared as Psychê-ward he goes
By your beauty, — by your slim,
White, perfect beauty.

After him
Horace, finding in your eyes
Horace limned in lustrous wise,
Would have made you melodies
Fittingly to hymn your praise,
Sweet Adelaïs.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Had your father's household been
Guelfic-born or Ghibelline,
Beatricê were unknown
On her star-encompassed throne.

For, had Dante viewed your grace,
Adelais, sweet Adelais,
You had reigned in Bicê's place, —
Had, for candles, Sirius,
Rigel and Rutilicus,
Whilst you heard Zachâriel
Chant of you, and, chanting, tell
All the grace of you, and praise
Sweet Adelais.

Had you lived when earth was new
What had bards of old to do
Save to sing in praise of you?

They had sung-of you always,
Adelais, sweet Adelais,
As worthiest of all men's praise;
Nor had undying melodies
Wailed soft as love may sing of these
Dream-hallowed names, — of Héloïse,
Ysoude, Salomê, Semelê,
Morgaine, Lucrece, Antiopê,

VERTICORDIA

Brunhilda, Helen, Mélusine,
Penelopê, and Magdalene:
— But you alone had all men's praise,
Sweet Adelaïs.

LVI. LOVE'S LOVERS

— After RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS

NOR HAD *undying melodies*
Wailed soft as love may sing of these
That are love's martyrs, — Héloïse,
Brunhilda, Helen, Mélusine,
Antioû, and Magdalene, —
Ysoude, Salomê, Semelê,
Lucretia, and Penelopê.

What of these ladies that have been
Exalted by stern songs wherein
Beats strong the valorous heart of Love
And all the power and pride thereof —
Unto what haven are they sped?

Because they are not wholly dead:
The Land of Matters Unforgot
They walk at will, where time is not
And death has no dominion, —
And there they never view the sun,
But through a vague and amiable
Hushed twilight pass, and, passing, tell

VERTICORDIA

Their tale of ancient miseries,
And neither laugh nor weep.

To these,
Whose lives were troubled harmonies
Whereby the heart of Love yet is
Enamored, Love at last accords
An end of love. To these, the Lords
Of Life and Death, that kindled lust,
And wrath, and joy frail as blown dust,
And faith like flame that braves the wind;
And kindled for each sin they sinned
Fame, and for every misery fame
Set as a flaring star to flame
And blaze and glow above the seas
Where light love founders: have granted peace
Unvexed by heart-beats. — Thus they pass,
Desiring naught of life that was
Exhausted of all things long ago, —
With void eyes, emptied of woe,
Emptied of joy, pass hand-in-hand,
Being shadows in a shadow land.

The story of their love is writ
In song; the valiant sound of it
Endures unaltered evermore:
But we, that love as heretofore
These loved, must perish, as they, and be
Forgotten by all men utterly.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

I cry *Content!* Our names will die.
I cry *Content!* and cheerily,
Félice.

Our love-songs are unsung,
Yet we have loved. We have been young
In April and in unison . . .
Oblivious of oblivion,
And heedless of each after-year,
How well we lived our verses, dear!

BOOK EIGHT
RIDENS

“ Soient blanches, soient brunettes ”

LVII. BALLAD OF PLAGIARY

"Frères et maîtres, vous qui cultivez"

— PAUL VERVILLE

HEY, MY masters, lords and brothers, ye that till the
fields of rhyme,

Are ye deaf ye will not hearken to the clamor of your time?

Still ye blot and change and polish — vary, heighten and
transpose —

Old sonorous metres marching grandly to their tranquil
close.

Ye have toiled and ye have fretted; ye attain perfected
speech:

Ye have nothing new to utter and but platitudes to preach.

Still your rhymes are all of loving, as within the old days
when

Love was lord of the ascendant in the horoscopes of men.

Still ye make of love the utmost end and scope of all your
art,

And, more blind than he you write of, note not what a
modest part

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Loving now may claim in living, when we have scant time
to spare,
Who are plundering the sea-depths, taking tribute of the
air, —
Whilst the sun makes pictures for us; since to-day, for
good or ill,
Earth and sky and sea are harnessed, and the lightnings
work our will.

Hey, my masters, all these love-songs by dust-hidden mouths
were sung
That ye mimic and re-echo with an artful-artless
tongue, —
Sung by poets close to nature, free to touch her garments'
hem
Whom to-day ye know not truly; for ye only copy them.

Them ye copy, copy always, with your backs turned to the
sun,
Caring not what man is doing, noting that which man
has done.

*We are talking over telephones, as Shakespeare could not
talk;
We are riding out in motor-cars, where Homer had to
walk;
And pictures Dante labored on of mediæval Hell
The nearest cinematograph paints quicker, and as well.*

RIDENS

But ye copy, copy always; — and ye marvel when ye find
This new beauty, that new meaning, — while a model
stands behind,

Waiting, young and fair as ever, till some singer turn and
trace

Something of the deathless wonder of life lived in any
place.

Hey, my masters, turn from piddling to the turmoil and
the strife!

Cease from sonneting, my brothers; let us fashion songs
from life.

THUS I WROTE ERE SYLVIA PASSED ME. . . . THEN DID I
EPITOMIZE

ALL LIFE'S BEAUTY IN ONE POEM, AND MAKE HASTE TO
EULOGIZE

QUITE THE FAIREST THING LIFE BOASTS OF, FOR I WROTE
OF SYLVIA'S EYES.

LVIII. TOUCHING UBIQUITY

"Voulant faire un cadeau digne de la plus belle"

— CHARLES GARNIER

§ I

THE gods in honor of my Sylvia's worth
Bore gifts to her: — and Jove, Olympus' lord,
Co-rule of Earth and Heaven did accord,
And Hermes brought that lyre he framed at birth,
And Venus her famed girdle (to engirth
A fairer beauty now), and Mars his sword,
And wrinkled Plutus half the secret hoard
And immemorial treasure of mid-earth.

Then while the careful gods were pondering
Which of these goodly gifts the goodliest was,
Young Cupid came among them carolling
And proffered unto her a looking-glass,
Wherein she gazed and saw the goodliest thing
That Earth had borne, and Heaven might not surpass.

RIDENS

§ 2

Cupid invaded Hell, and boldly drove
Before him all the hosts of Erebus,
Till he had conquered; and grim Cerberus
Sang madrigals, the Furies rhymed of love,
Old Charon sighed, and sonnets rang above
The gloomy Styx; and even as Tantalus
Was Prosperine discrowned in Tartarus,
And Cupid regnant in the place thereof.

Thus Love is monarch throughout Hell to-day;
In Heaven we know his power was always great;
And Earth acclaimed Love's mastery straightway
When Sylvia came to gladden Earth's estate:—
Thus Hell and Heaven and Earth his rule obey,
And Sylvia's heart alone is obdurate.

LIX. FANCIES IN FILIGREE

— Strambotti of ALESSANDRO DE MEDICI

[XXIV]

“Guarda negli occhi la nostra regina”

MY LADY's Eyes Remembrance bring
Of lyttel Waves whose Wavering
Beneathe ye roving Summer Breeze
Makes scintillant hushed Summer Seas
Whenas ye Sun is vanishing.

They gladden me, as when in Spring
We sing & knowe not why we sing.
In sooth, there be noe Eyes like these
My Lady's Eyes.

Whenas their Glance is threatening
They frighten Cupid, & that King
From Florimel a-quaking flees;
But when they soften, on hys Knees
Love falls before them worshipping
My Lady's Eyes.

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RIDENS

[XLI]

"Rime d'amore usar dolci e leggiadre"

Ye little Rhyme I swore last Night
To lay before ye Eyes so bright
I have long loved — & loved too well! —
So now ye Muses to compell,
& shapely Phrases to indite.

Which shall it be? — Ye Villanelle,
Ode, Triolet, Rondeau, Rondel,
Ballade, or Sonnet? — Each is hight
Ye littel Rhyme.

Yet none will aide my hapless Plight:
All little Rhymes are short & slight,
& of ye Charmes of Florimel
An Epick's Length alone can tell, —
So that of her I may not write
Ye lyttel Rhyme.

LX. IT IS ENOUGH

— After NICOLAS DE CAEN

LOVE ME or love me not, it is enough
That I have loved you, seeing my whole life is
Uplifted and made glad by the glory of Love, —
My life that was a scroll bescrewled and blurred
With tavern-catches, which that pity of his
Erased, and wrote instead one lonely word,
Yolande!

I have accorded you incessant praise
And song and service, dear, because of this;
And always I have dreamed incessantly
Who always dreamed, — *When in oncoming days*
This man or that shall love you, and at last
This man or that shall win you, it must be
That, loving him, you will have pity on me
When happiness engenders memory
And long thoughts nor unkindly of the past,
Yolande!

Of this I know not surely, — who am sure
That I shall always love you while I live,

RIDENS

And that, when I am dead, with naught to give
Of song or service, Love will yet endure,
And yet retain his last prerogative,
When I lie still, and sleep out centuries
With dreams of you and the exceeding love
I bore you, and am glad dreaming thereof,
And give God thanks for all, and so find peace,
Yolande!

LXI. AN ARCADIAN APOLOGIZES

— After CHARLES GARNIER

I PRAY you do not marvel, dear, that I,
Whenever with fond hardihood I try
To rhyme your praises, fail ingloriously.

And marvel not that I in happier wise
Have hymned Félise and lauded Sylvia's eyes,
And now may offer you no melodies.

We poets are so made that when we be
Unscathed by love none woos so well as we,
But, wounded once, we worship silently.

LXII. ARCADIAN'S CONFERENCE IN EXILE

— After CHARLES GARNIER

§ 1

SO LONG ago it was! Nay, is it true
In verity we passed a month or so
In Arcady when life and love were new
 So long ago?

The tide of time's indomitable flow,
Augmenting, rears a drearier realm, whereto
We twain are exiled. Yet . . . I do not know . . .
Now that a woman calls, whose eyes are blue,
Whose speech is gracious — strangely sweet and low
She calls, and smiles as STELLA used to do
 So long ago.

§ 2

I am not fit to follow; yet I pray
Some mighty task be set me, to commit
In her dear name, for trifles to essay
 I am not fit.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Nay, I, unstable and infirm of wit —
Even I! — return to my old love to-day,
Whose bounty is so fond and infinite
That I am heartened, and made strong, and may
Not ever falter in deserving it,
If but for dread lest of such grace men say
I am not fit.

§ 3

Time has changed naught in us; for now the din
And darkness of tempestuous years, that wrought
So vainly, lift; and it is lightly seen
Time has changed naught.

Such knowledge of those brawling years I bought:
The thing which shall be is that which has been,
When heaven again surprises us, unsought,
And life returns full circle; and we win
Again to realms which with how little thought
We ceded, and find loyalty wherein
Time has changed naught.

§ 4

Sweetheart, I wait; now, as in time gone by,
Your suppliant, half-frightened, half-elate,
Outside the trellised doors of Arcady,
Sweetheart, I wait.

RIDENS

Again I glimpse its meadows — through a grate,
Alas! — and streams and groves and cloudless sky;
And cry to you to be compassionate, —
Yea, as of old to STELLA, now I cry
To you that once were STELLA; and my fate
Attends your piloting, for whose reply,
Sweetheart, I wait.

LXIII. THE EAVESDROPPERS

— After ALPHONSE MOREAU

THE HEART of the twilight is troubled; and there
Where the stubbled fields bathe in colorless air,
And show as the chin of a giant unshorn,
Dog-weary, and dreaming of days unborn,
The east is perturbed; and night kindles to morn.

Wide world, that wakes to each miracle
Each dawn engenders, thou wilt not tell,
If mother of me indeed thou art,
How gladly and furtively I depart
Master and lord of Phyllida's heart.

Hah, Lady Moon, so we meet again!
I remember. Who silvered the window-pane,
Climbed over heaped faggots with noiseless tread,
Turned velvet the cobwebs that gleamed overhead,
Stealthily, hearkening to all we said?

Eavesdropper, keep my secret well!
Remember the tales that old poets tell
Of the Latmian hills, and a cave thereon
Whereinto passed when each day was done —
Eavesdropper! — not only Endymion.

RIDENS

Ye will not tell of it. Nor will he,
The owl that hoots now in yonder tree,
And flutters his wings, with a watchful eye
Bent through the boughs at a passer-by
Who laughs, in the dawn . . . and he wonders why.

LXIV. NOSTALGIA

— After ALPHONSE MOREAU

WERE THE All-Mother wise, life (shaped another-
wise)

Would be all high and true;

Could I be otherwise I had been otherwise

Simply because of you. . .

With whom I have naught to do,

And who are no longer you!

Life with its pay to be bade us essay to be

What we became, — I believe

Were there a way to be what it was play to be

I would not greatly grieve. . .

Hearts are not worn on the sleeve.

Let us neither laugh nor grieve!

BUT, OH, THE WORLD IS WIDE, DEAR LASS,
THAT I MUST WANDER THROUGH,
AND MANY A WIND AND TIDE, DEAR LASS,
MUST FLOW 'TWIXT ME AND YOU,

RIDENS

ERE LOVE THAT MAY NOT BE DENIED

SHALL BRING ME BACK TO YOU,

— DEAR LASS!

SHALL BRING ME BACK TO YOU.

BOOK NINE

APATURIA

“ Ainsi m’ont amours abusé ”

LXV. GRAY DAYS

— After NICOLAS DE CAEN

I CAN FIND no meaning in life,
That have weighed the world, — and it was
Abundant with folly, and rife
With sorrows brittle as glass,
And with joys that flicker and pass
Like dreams through a fevered head;
And as the dripping of rain
In gardens naked and dead
Is the obdurate thin refrain
Of our youth which is presently dead.

And Chloris, whom last I loved,
Looks ever with loathing on me,
As one she hath seen disproved
And stained with such smirches as be
Not ever cleansed utterly;
And is loth to remember the days
When destiny fixed her name
As the theme and the goal of my praise;
And my love engenders shame,
And I stain what I strive for and praise.

Chloris, most perfect of all,
Just to have known you is well!
And it heartens me now to recall
That just to have known you is well,
And naught else is desirable
Save only to do as you willed
And to love you my whole life long; —
But this heart in me is filled
With hunger cruel and strong,
And with hunger unfulfilled.

Fond heart, though thy hunger be
As a flame that wanders unstilled,
There is none more perfect than she!

LXVI. A WOOD-PIECE

YES, YOU will soon forget. Leaf-shadowed ways
Are disenchanted now; the kindly haze
Of love-light lifts from too-long loitering;
A kiss is now at most two lips that cling;
And mirth is dead now; and desire decays.

Even now Love flutters restive wings, and stays
Impatient of restraint, what while I praise
Love's old lost favor, past replevining, —
But you will soon forget.

Yes, you will soon forget: and naught betrays
That any heart save mine even now inveighs
In futile rage because nor youth nor spring
Can stay or solace light love's vanishing.
I shall remember, dear, through all my days,
But you will soon forget.

LXVII. LOVE GOES INTO WINTER QUARTERS

— After ANTOINE RICZI

THE SCENE a dale, somewhere in Arcady,
But filled with snow and sleet, made horrible
By many tramlings; there anon must be
A CRIER, robed in black and with a bell;
To whom a POET, peering curiously.

POET

What art thou calling, small sombre Crier? —
Who seeks what fugitive? who is beguiled?
Is it a theft or a house to hire,
A sheriff's sale or a stolen child?

THE CRIER

For none of these do I play the crier,
And toll a reward where the winds are wild,
And I strive knee-deep in the sleet and the mire
In quest of a kingdom undefiled.

APATURIA

POET

Reward, quoth he! — and how darest thou prattle
Of guerdon-giving, that goest in black,
Sans cap and sandals, where bleak winds battle
To wrest each rag from thy tattered back?

THE CRIER

Of no compulsion save my own pleasure's
I wear this black — for a mourning sign, —
Till Yesterday waken, and yield the treasures
And gold-wrought garments which once were mine.

POET

Faith, only a madman dreams to muster
The bygone hours, bid them live again . . .
Though Cræsus wheedle or Charlemagne bluster,
Time heeds not at all, and they strive in vain.

THE CRIER

Nay, Time forgets them; for these — unlanded,
Unkinged, uncarnate, and cold, — lie hid
Where Time comes never, to be commanded; —
Time cannot hear through the coffin's lid.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

POET

So it matters naught with what pomp they wended,
What queens they wed, and what realms they won!
These things were goodly; these things are ended;
And naught sleeps sounder than joy fordone.

THE CRIER

Cry Absit omen! the sermon is stupid —
Hey, even of sermons I grow afraid,
Who am no madman, but outlawed CUPID,
With never a place to lay my head.

But Yesterday! for Yesterday!
I cry a reward for a Yesterday
Now lost or stolen or gone astray,
With all the laughter of Yesterday!

(FOR WE HAVE MADE AN END OF AMOROUS PLAYING,
AND SHALLOW-HEARTED LOVE IS TURNED ASTRAY,
WITH CHILDISH SORROWING AND WEAK-VOICED PRAYING
FOR YESTERDAY.)

LXVIII. FLOTSAM

WE DID not share the same inheritance, —
I and this woman, five years older than I,
Yet daughter of a later century, —
Who is therefore only wearied by that dance
Which has set my blood a-leaping.

It is queer
To note how kind her face grows, listening
To my wild talk, and plainly pitying
My callow youth, and seeing in me a dear
Amusing boy, — yet somewhat old to be
Still reading *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*
And *Water Babies*. . .

With light talk we pass.

And I that have lived long in Arcady —
I that have kept so many a foolish tryst,
And written drivelling rhymes — feel stirring in me
Droll pity for this woman who pities me,
And whose weak mouth so many men have kissed.

LXIX. HEIRS UNAPPARENT

HOW VERY heartily I hate
The man that will love you,
Some day, somewhere, and more than I,
And with a love more true; —
Whom for that reason you will love
As you may not love me, —
Though I might hold your heart, I think,
Held I one heart in fee.

My dear, too many ghosts arise
Between us when I woo,
One mocking me with softer lips,
And one with eyes more blue,
And one with hands more fine than yours,
And one with lovelier hair,
Proclaiming: — *She is fair enough,*
But then . . . I too was fair.

What of thy heart thou gavest me
(“ And me! ” — “ And me! ”) — is thine
No more to give again. That part
Is mine. — (“ And mine! ” — “ And mine! ”)

APATURIA

*And he that plays with love too long
Gets love of many-an-one,
But is denied Love's crowning grace,
And can give love to none.*

Since these be truthful ghosts, I shrug
And woo you without tears
Or too much laughter, till with time
A properer Prince appears,
Whom very heartily I hate, —
The man that will love you,
Some day, somewhere, and more than I,
And with a love more true.

LXX. THE SUN'S HIGHWAY

— After ANTOINE RICZI

THOUGH LONG be the way to the Limit of Lands,
And through leagues and leagues of treacherous sands,
And miles of marsh and mire,
One must win, if at all, to the rim of the west
Ere one enter the kingdom of the sun loves best,
Yet there is my heart's desire.

And lately I learned of a pleasanter way
Which two of us travel on every day —
Oh, for all that a staid world deems
None cross high heaven, men have forgot
The sun in his flamy chariot
And me in my car of dreams!

Whereby we win to a land of ease
In whose stately glittering palaces
Wracked lives are lived anew, —
For the sun and I go on pilgrimage
To the lovelier land of a younger age,
Where what might have been is true.

APATURIA

I may not know on what lordly quest
The sun fares sturdily into the west,
But I know that he goes with joy,
And espies, perhaps, past the mountained rim
Repentant Daphnê awaiting him,
Or Creusa no longer coy.

There, too, she waits whom alone I love;
And a chill light heart that I could not move
And bright eyes which would not see
My heart's hard hunger, no more the same,
Enkindle and nourish love's lovely flame,
And its beacon burns for me.

Well! I must win to her; I must kneel —
Kneel at her naked feet, — and feel
Soft hands that caress my hair
Silently — oh, in such tender wise
That I shall not hasten to raise tired eyes
To a face however fair.

Fair face unstained by the grave's eclipse!
Fair face that lifts now to no man's lips
And troubles no man's sleep!
The woman that wore you has children now. . .
But that is nothing; I keep my vow,
And I have a tryst to keep.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

And so in a world whose tumults seem
Intriguing shadows I tread, and dream
Of a maiden who dreams of me:
For the tryst is set; be it late, be it soon,
Or east of the sun or west of the moon,
I shall win to you, Dorothy.

LXXI. THE OLDEST DITTY

— After NICOLAS DE CAEN

AND so farewell; — for now assuredly
Did the long pulse of the profoundest sea,
So deep it knows not light nor any heat,
Vex now some seaweed thick about my feet
Which there had nodded through a century,
All faith in you were not more dead in me, —
And so farewell!

And so, *Farewell!* I cry, — that may not see
Love quicken in the eyes of Dorothy
Ever again, nor evermore repeat
Mad rhymes to her, nor ever bend to meet
Her lips this side of all eternity; —
Love hath nowhere enfixed pre-potency,
And so farewell!

LXXII. TO THE SAME AIR AS THE PRECEDING

AND so *farewell* (as my rondeau wails
In obsolete accents and absolute truth),
For all is over, and nothing avails
To capture the rapture of last year's youth.

All is quite over. Touch hands. Good-bye.
For you the future is nowise dim;
For me there are other women, and I
Must forget you now, since that is your whim.

And we will laugh in the after-times
At two young people we knew, no doubt,
Who scribbled each other such woeful rhymes
And played a comical tragedy out.

We shall not die of it. We shall be
Contented and healed of the passing smart;
And yet if you had not tired of me,
Life while life lasted were yours, sweetheart.

BOOK TEN

ARMATA

“ Ainsi le bon temps regretons ”

LXXIII. LIGHT COINAGE

— "MERCURIENS": PAUL VERVILLE

[xx]

"C'est une comédie, qui termine aujourd'huy"

THAT COMEDY we end, content to please
Its players merely, was a comedy
Wherein Love had no part. It may not be
Enrolled among Love's mighty memories,
And men unborn will read of Héloïse,
And Ruth, and Rosamond, and Semelê,
When none remembers your name's melody
Or rhymes your name enregistered with these.

And will my name wake moods as amorous
As that of Abélard or Lancelot
Arouses? be recalled when Pyramus
And Tristram are unrhymed of and forgot? —
Time's laughter answers, who accords to us
More gracious fields, wherein we harvest — what?

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

[xxiii]

“Voicy! un autre chante! — Il n’est pas interdit”

*A singer, eh? . . . Well, well! but when he sings
Take jealous heed lest idiosyncrasies
Entinge and taint too deep his melodies;
See that his lute has no discordant strings
To harrow us; and let his vaporings
Be all of virtue and its victories,
And of man’s best and noblest qualities,
And scenery, and flowers and similar things.*

Thus bid our paymasters, whose mutterings
Some few deride, and blithely link their rhymes
At random; and, as ever, on frail wings
Of wine-stained paper scribbled with such rhymes
Men mount to heaven, and loud laughter springs
From hell’s midpit, whose fuel is such rhymes.

LXXIV. GRAVE GALLANTRY

— After CHARLES GARNIER

§ 1

MY RIVAL Death is fashioned amorously; —
No caliph boasts more comely wives than he,
For whom crowned Cleopatra reft the snare
Of careful-eyed Octavius, and — less fair
Than she, but lovely still — Leucothoë,
And Atalanta, and Antigônê,
Loosed virgin zones . . . What need hadst thou to be
Desirous then of this girl's lips and hair,
My rival Death?

What need hadst thou likewise of Dorothy!
What need of that which was all life to me!
What need, lascivious Death, that she forswear
Fond oaths to me — fond oaths made elsewhere —
In thy lank arms, and leave me friends with thee,
My rival, Death!

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

§ 2

Had she divined how many virelais
Have feebly parodied some piercing phase
Of love for her whom love lacked might to claim —
How many rhymes have marshalled frail and lame,
Yet fervent-hearted, to avouch her praise, —
Such pity had been mine as well repays
Drear years of waiting. Ey, in kindlier days
Compassion might have worn some kinglier name
Had she divined.

Now that may never be; divergent ways
Allured; and all is ended; and naught betrays
Dead cheeks to kindle, now, with livelier flame
For aught I utter. . . Yet it were no shame
To dream a little on her softening gaze
Had she divined.

§ 3

That she is dead breeds no uncouth despair,
However, — as death bred when men would bear
A glove upon their helms, and slay or sing
In honor of its giver, hazarding
Life and life's aims because a girl was fair. . .
Grotesque their liege-lord seems when we compare

ARMATA

That Cupidling who spurs me to declare
Sedate regret, in rhythmic sorrowing
That she is dead.

Nay, he is much the punier of the pair, —
My little lord, who dreads lest critics stare
Too pointedly, — a flimsy fainéant king; —
Yet hearts may crack without crude posturing.
This girl is dead; and I confess I care
That she is dead.

LXXV. BY-WORDS

— After ALPHONSE MOREAU

NOT EVEN now in all things may there be
An end of folly; nor, as mutineers
Against love's lunacy, that now appears
Of no more weight or worth or urgency
Than last night's dreams, — nor wholly yet may we
Become in all things like all our compeers,
That are armored by interminable years
And keep no vestige of insanity.

*What yet remains, now we drift far apart,
With seas between, and each of us forgets
The happenings of all our happy days? —
Your by-words, heard on other lips, to raise
Love's pitiable phantom in my heart,
And waken mirthful memories and regrets.*

LXXVI. ANOTHER LABORER WEIGHS HIS HIRE

"Amors, tant vos ai servit"

— RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS

LORD, I have worshipped thee ever, —
Through all these years
I have served thee, forsaking never
Light Love that veers
As a child between laughter and tears.
Hast thou no more to afford, —
Naught save laughter and tears, —
Love, my lord?

I have borne thy heaviest burden,
Nor served thee amiss:
When thou hast given a guerdon,
Lo, it was this —
A sigh, a shudder, a kiss.
Hast thou no more to accord?
I would have more than this,
Love, my lord.

I am wearied of love that is pastime
And gifts that it brings;
I entreat of thee, lord, at this last time
Ineffable things. . .

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Nay, have proud long-dead kings
Stricken no subtler chord,
Whereof the memory clings,
Love, my lord?

But for a little we live;
Show me thine innermost hoard!
Hast thou no more to give,
Love, my lord?

LXXXVII. RETRACTIONS

— After THÉODORE PASSERAT

YOU ASK A SONNET? — WELL, IT IS YOUR RIGHT.
I GRANT IT, LAUGH, SHRUG, SET ABOUT THE TASK,
AND MAKE A SEQUENCE, SINCE IT IS MY RIGHT
NO MORE TO GIVE YOU ONLY WHAT YOU ASK.

§ 1

ALTHOUGH as yet my cure be incomplete,
Yet love of you, time-lulled and vigorless,
Engenders now no more unhappiness,
Not even discontent. And now we meet
Unmoved — half-waggish, — and my pulses beat
Quite calmly as I wonder now, *Is he*
As proud as I was? and — as once to me —
To him is her love lovely and very sweet?

Nor do I grudge him any joy of his
Who follows on a road that I have trod,
And sues for love where I was wont to sue;
I am contented by remembrances,
And know that neither fate nor time, nor God,
Robs me of that first mastery of you.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

§ 2

I am contented by remembrances, —
Dreams of dead passions, wraiths of vanished times,
Fragments of vows, and by-ends of old rhymes, —
Flotsam and jetsam tumbling in the seas
Whereon, long since, put forth our argosies
Which, launched for traffic in the Isles of Love,
Lie foundered somewhere in some firth thereof,
Encradled by eternal silences.

Thus, having come to naked bankruptcy,
Let us part friends, as thrifty tradesmen do
When common ventures fail; for it may be
These battered oaths and rhymes may yet ring true
To some fair woman's hearing, so that she
Will listen and think of love, and I of you.

§ 3

You have chosen the love "that lives sans murmurings,
Sans passion," and incuriously endures
The gradual lapse of time. You have chosen as yours
A level life of little happenings;
And through the long autumnal evenings
Lord Love, no doubt, is of the company,
And hugs your ingleside contentedly,
Smiles at old griefs, and rustles needless wings.

ARMATA

And yet I think that sometimes memories
Of divers trysts, of blood that urged like wine
On moonlit nights, and of that first long kiss
Whereby your lips were first made one with mine,
Awake and trouble you, and loving is
Once more important and perhaps divine.

§ 4

You have chosen; and I cry content thereto,
And cry your pardon also, and am reproved
In that I took you for a woman I loved
Odd centuries ago, and would undo
That curious error. Nay, your eyes are blue,
Your speech is gracious, but you are not she;
And I am older, — and changed how utterly! —
I am no longer I, you are not you.

Time, destined as we thought but to befriend
And guerdon love like ours, finds you beset
With joys and griefs I neither share nor mend
Who am a stranger; and we two are met
Nor wholly glad nor sorry, and the end
Of too much laughter is a faint regret.

§ 5

It is in many ways made plain to us
That love must grow like any common thing,
Root, bud, and leaf, ere ripe for garnering
The mellow fruitage front us; even thus

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Must Helena encounter Thesëus
Ere Paris come, and every century
Spawn divers queens who die with Antony
But live a great while first with Julius.

Thus I have spoken the prologue of a play
Wherein I have no part, and laugh, and sit
Contented in the wings, whilst you portray
An amorous maid with gestures that befit
This lovely rôle, — as who knows better, pray,
Than I that helped you in rehearsing it?

§ 6

With Love I garnered mirth, and dreams, and shame;
And half his playmate, half his worshipper,
I flouted him, and yet might not demur
To do his bidding, or in aught defame
Love's tutorage, — not even when you came,
And at the portal of Love's golden house
We hazarded stray kisses, sighs and vows,
And lightly staked them in a hackneyed game.

And now the game is ended, dear; and we
May not re-enter that august domain
Which we, encoasting, lost eternally;
And now, although beloved by many men,
You may love no man as you have loved me,
Who have loved you as I may not love again.

ARMATA

§ 7

Unto how many futures I was heir
In those old talks, which fixed what must be done
When we at last should rule (in Babylon
Perhaps, or in Caer-Is, or Kennaquhair),
And must do this or that, and bravely share
Fantastic fates, whose frolic freakishness
Seems how less quaint than this is, — to confess
That I have lost you, and do not greatly care!

Well! had we never cared, in all that fleet
Sweet time which passed so swiftly and is gone —
And gone eternally! — yet it was sweet
To play at loving, for all that every groan,
And gainless grieving, was in counterfeit
And parody of love, ungained, unknown.

§ 8

And so we played at loving. So we played
With love as venturous children in the sea
Wade ankle-deep, and laugh, and wistfully
Peer at the world's far rim, being half-afraid,
Half-wistful. So we laughed, and we obeyed
That changeless law which sways the cosmic plan,
And ever draws the maid unto the man,
And ever draws the man unto the maid.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

The sea hides deep our fragile argosy,
And idle doubts quest fruitlessly above
Those shattered hulks, too frail to brave the sea,
Too frail to brave the wrath and mirth thereof:
I had not heart to love you heartily,
You were too shrewd to be befooled by love.

§ 9

Time was I coveted the woes they rued
Whose love commemorates them — I that meant
To get like grace of love then! — and intent
To win, as they had done, love's plenitude,
Rapture and havoc, vauntingly I sued
That love like theirs might make a toy of me,
At will caressed, at will (if publicly)
Demolished, as Love found or found not good.

To-day I am no longer overbrave.
I have a fever — I that always knew
This hour was certain! — and am too weak to rave,
Too tired to seek (as later I must do)
Tried remedies — time, manhood and the grave, —
To drug, abate and banish love of you.

§ 10

Time was I loved you. . . . And indeed I came
To love you so time hardly washes out
The scars of an old moment which, as flame
Leaps toward chaff, bereft me even of doubt:

ARMATA

And then indeed I knew you had deceived me —
You, even you! — and counterfeiting truth
So cunningly that you and I believed me,
I cried, *I will forget!* . . . This was in youth.

Now, being older and less over-nice,
I estimate these follies, breed of them
My little books, — shift, polish and re-price
The jewels of a battered diadem, —
And cry, *What hope of heaven for those who sell*
What I am vending? and what need of hell?

§ 11

We are as time moulds us, lacking wherewithal
To shape out nobler fortunes or contend
Against all-patient Fates, who may not mend
The allotted pattern of things temporal,
Or alter it a thread's-width, or let fall
A single stitch thereof, until at last
The web and its drear weavers be overcast,
And predetermined darkness swallow all.

They have ordained for us a time to sing,
A time to love, a time wherein to tire
Of all spent songs and kisses; carolling
Such elegies as buried dreams require,
Love now departs, and leaves us shivering
Beside the embers of a burned-out fire.

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

§ 12

Cry *Kismet!* and take heart. Erôs is gone,
Nor may we follow to that loftier air
Olympians breathe. Take heart, and enter where
A lighter love-lord takes a heatless sun,
Oblivious of tangled webs ill-spun
By ancient wearied weavers, for it may be
His guidance leads to lovers of such as we
And hearts so credulous as to be won.

Cry *Kismet!* Put away vain memories
Of all old sorrows and of all old joys,
And learn that life is never quite amiss
So long as unreflective girls and boys
Remember that young lips were meant to kiss,
And hold that laughter is a seemly noise.

§ 13

So, let us laugh . . . How quaint that even I
Was once a fool such as each fool bemocks,
Burlesques and shames! how droll a paradox
It is that we meet calmly! nor deny
That I in an old time dared to be I,
And you in that same season dared be you,
When commonly we wooed (as others do,
And we do not, now) dreams which do not die, —

ARMATA

But take new life, with new idolaters,
Among our juniors; and in naught are kin
To our time-tempered blood which, drowsing, stirs
A little, recollecting with what din
And ardor we assailed stark barriers
Proved obdurate ere we were locked therein.

§ 14

So, let us laugh, — lest vain rememberings
Breed, as of old, some rude bucolic cry
Of awkward anguishes, of dreams that die
Without decorum, of Love lacking wings
Yet striving you-ward in his flounderings
Eternally, — as now, even when I lie
As I lie now, who know that you and I
Exist and heed not lesser happenings.

I was. I am. I will be. Eh, no doubt
For some sufficient cause, I drift, defer,
Equivocate, dream, hazard, grow more stout,
Age, am no longer Love's idolater, —
And yet I could and would not live without
Your faith that heartens and your doubts which spur.

§ 15

Nightly I mark and praise, or great or small,
Such stars as proudly struggle one by one
To heaven's highest place, as Procyon,
Antarês, Naös, Tejat and Nibal

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

Attain supremacy, and proudly fall,
Still glorious, and glitter, and are gone
So very soon; — whilst steadfast and alone
Polaris gleams, and is not changed at all.

Daily I find some gallant dream that ranges
The heights of heaven; and as others do,
I serve my dream until my dream estranges
Its errant bondage, and I note anew
That nothing dims, nor shakes, nor mars, nor changes,
Fond faith in you and in my love of you.

AND THEREFORE PRAISE I EVEN THE MOST HIGH
LORD CHANCE, — THAT, BEING OF KIN WITH SETEBOS,
IN ORDERING LIFE'S LABOR, STRIFE AND LOSS,
ORDAINED THAT YOU BE YOU, AND I BE I.

LXXXVIII. GARDEN-SONG

"Adieu, nous n'irons plus aux champs"

— CHARLES GARNIER

FAREWELL to Fields and Butterflies
And levities of Yester-year!
For we espy, and hold more dear,
The Wicket of our Destinies.

Whereby we enter, once for all,
A Garden which such Fruit doth yield
As, tasted once, no more Afield
We fare where Youth holds carnival.

Farewell, fair Fields, none found amiss
When laughter was a frequent noise
And golden-hearted girls and boys
Appraised the mouth they meant to kiss.

Farewell, farewell! but for a space
We, being young, Afield might stray,
That in our Garden nod and say,
A field is no unpleasant place.

LXXIX. THE CAVERN OF PHIGALIA

(Adytum of Demeter Melænis)

I ENTER,
Proud and erect:
I take my fill of delight
Imperiously, irrationally,
And none punishes.

— Not yet.

But in three months
And in three months
And in three more months,
The avenger comes forth
And mocks me
By being as I am,
Visibly,
And by being foredoomed
To do as I have done,
Inevitably.

LXXX. AT PARTING

THUS THEN I end my calendar
Of ancient loves more light than air; —
And now Lad's Love, that led afar
In April fields that were so fair,
Is fled, and I no longer share
Sedate unutterable days
With Heart's Desire, nor ever praise
Félise, or mirror forth the lures
Of Stella's eyes nor Sylvia's,
Yet love for each loved lass endures.

*Chloris is wedded, and Ettarre
Forgets; Yolande loves otherwhere,
And worms long since made bold to mar
The lips of Dorothy and fare
Mid Florimel's bright ruined hair;
And time obscures that roseate haze
Which glorified hushed woodland ways
When Phyllis came, as time obscures
That faith which once was Phyllida's, —
Yet love for each loved lass endures.*

FROM THE HIDDEN WAY

*That boy is dead as Schah-riar,
Tiglath-Pileser, or Clotaire,
Who once of love got many a scar.
And his loved lasses past compare? —
None is alive now anywhere.
Each is transmuted nowadays
Into a stranger, and displays
No whit of love's investitures.
I let these women go their ways,
Yet love for each loved lass endures.*

*Heart o' My Heart, thine be the praise
If aught of good in me betrays
Thy tutelage — whose love matures
Unmarred in these more wistful days, —
Yet love for each loved lass endures.*

THE MORAL OF IT ALL

Borrowed from Gerald Musgrave

LOVE MAKES
AMONG
THE YOUNG
SUCH QUAKE
AND ACHES.

YOUTH RATES
THE FATES.

AGE TAKES
WHAT THEY
ALLOT, —
AND YET,
THE GRAY
DO NOT
FORGET.

The Jewel Merchants

A Comedy of Echoes

*“Io non posso ritrar di tutti appieno:
però che sì mi caccia il lungo tema,
che molte volte al fatto il dir vien meno.”*

The acting rights to "The Jewel Merchants" are reserved by the author, to whom application must be made for the privilege of performing this play.

For

LOUISE BURLEIGH

THIS LATEST AVATAR OF SO MANY NOTIONS
WHICH WERE ORIGINALLY HERS

THE AUTHOR'S PROLOGUE

PRUDENCE urges me here to forestall detection, by conceding that this brief play has no pretension to "literary" quality. It is a piece in its inception designed for, and in its making swayed by, the requirements of the little theatre stage. The one virtue which anybody anywhere could claim for *The Jewel Merchants* is the fact that it "acts" easily and rather effectively.

And candor compels the admission forthwith that the presence of this anchoritic merit in the wilderness is hardly due to me. When circumstances and the Little Theatre League of Richmond combined to bully me into contriving a dramatization of the short story called *Balthazar's Daughter*, I docilely converted this tale into a one-act play of which you will find hereinafter no sentence. The comedy I wrote is now at one with the lost dramaturgy of Pollio and of Posidippus, and is even less likely ever to be resurrected for mortal auditors.

It read, I still think, well enough: I am certain that, when we came to rehearse, the thing did not "act" at all, and that its dialogue, whatever its other graces, had the defect of being unspeakable. So, at each rehearsal, we — by which inclusive pronoun I would embrace the actors and the production staff at large, and with especial (metaphorical)

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ardor Miss Louise Burleigh, who directed all — we, I repeat, changed here a little, and there a little more; and we shifted this bit, and deleted the other, and we “tried out” everybody’s suggestions generally, until we got at least the relief of witnessing at each rehearsal a different play. And steadily my manuscript was enriched with interlineations, to and beyond the limit of legibility, as steadily I substituted, for the speeches I had rewritten yesterday, the speeches which the actor (having perfectly in mind the gist but not the phrasing of what was meant) delivered naturally.

This process made, at all events, for what we in particular wanted, which was a play that the League could stage for half an evening’s entertainment; but it left existent not a shred of the rhetorical fripperies which I had in the beginning concocted, and it made of the actual first public performance a collaboration with almost as many contributing authors as though the production had been a musical comedy.

And if only fate had gifted me with an exigent conscience and a turn for oratory, I would, I like to think, have publicly confessed, at that first public performance, to all those tributary clarifying rills to the play’s progress: but, as it was, vainglory combined with an aversion to “speech-making” to compel a taciturn if smirking acceptance of the curtain-call with which an indulgent audience flustered the nominal author of *The Jewel Merchants*. . . . Now, in any case, it is due my collaborators to tell you that *The Jewel Merchants*, in the outcome, amply fulfilled the purpose of its makers by being enacted to a polite amount of

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applause, — and it is a pleasure to add that this *succès d'estime* was very little chargeable to anything which I contributed to the play.

For another matter, I would here confess that *The Jewel Merchants*, in addition to its “literary” deficiencies, lacks moral fervor. It will, I trust, corrupt no reader irretrievably, to untraversable leagues beyond the last hope of redemption: but, even so, it is a frankly unethical performance. You must accept this resuscitated trio, if at all, very much as they actually went about Tuscany, in long ago discarded young flesh, when the one trait everywhere common to their milieu was the absence of any moral excitement over such-and-such an action's being or not being “wicked.” This phenomenon of Renaissance life, as lived in Italy in particular, has elsewhere been discussed time and again, and I lack here the space, and the desire, either to explain or to apologize for the era's delinquencies. I would merely indicate that this point of conduct is the fulcrum of *The Jewel Merchants*.

The play presents three persons, to any one of whom the committing of murder or theft or adultery, or any other suchlike interdicted feat, is just the risking of the penalty provided against the breaking of that especial law if you have the vile luck to be caught at it: and this to them is all that “wickedness” can mean. We nowadays are encouraged to think differently: but such dear privileges do not entitle us to ignore the truth that had any of these three advanced a dissenting code of conduct, it would, in the time and locality, have been in radical irreverence of the best-

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thought-of tenets. There was no generally recognized criminality in crime, but only a perceptible risk. So must this trio thriftily adhere to the accepted customs of their era, and regard an infraction of the Decalogue (for an instance) very much as we to-day look on a violation of our prohibition enactments.

In fact, the status which we just now accord the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was at this time the status reserved for the Catholic faith. You found yourself confronted by occasionally enforced, if obviously unreasonable, supernal statutory decrees, which everyone broke now and then as a matter of convenience: and every now and then, also, somebody was caught and punished, either in this world or in the next, without his ill-fortune's involving any disgrace or particular reprehension. As has been finely said, righteousness and sinfulness were for the while "in strange and dreadful peace with each other. The wicked man did not dislike virtue, nor the good man vice: the villain could admire a saint, and the saint could excuse a villain, in things which we often shrink from repeating, and sometimes recoil from believing."

Such was the sixteenth-century Tuscan view of "wickedness." I have endeavored to reproduce it without comment.

So much of ink and paper and typography may be needed, I fear, to remind you, in a more exhortatory civilization, that Graciosa is really, by all the standards of her day, a well-reared girl. To the prostitution of her body, whether with or without the assistance of an ecclesiastically acquired husband, she looks forward as unconcernedly as you must by

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ordinary glance out of your front window, to face a vista so familiar that the discovery of any change therein would be troubling. Meanwhile she wishes this sorrow-bringing Eglamore assassinated, as the obvious, the most convenient, and indeed the only way of getting rid of him: and toward the end of the play, alike for her and Guido, the presence of a corpse in her garden is merely an inconvenience without any touch of the gruesome. Precautions have, of course, to be taken to meet the emergency which has arisen: but in the dead body of a man *per se*, the lovers can detect nothing more appalling, or more to be shrunk from, than would be apparent if the lifeless object in the walkway were a dead flower. The thing ought to be removed, if only in the interest of tidiness, but there is no call to make a pother over it.

As for our Guido, he is best kept conformable to modern tastes, I suspect, by nobody's prying too closely into the earlier relations between the Duke and his handsome minion. The insistent curiosity may resort to history to learn at what price the favors of Duke Alessandro were secured and retained: it is no part of the play.

Above all, though, I must remind you that the Duke is unspurred by malevolence. A twinge of jealousy there may be, just at first, to find his pampered Eglamore so far advanced in the good graces of this pretty girl, but that is hardly important. Thereafter the Duke is breaking no law, for the large reason that his preference in any matter is the only law thus far divulged to him. As concerns the man and the girl he discovers on this hill-top, they, in common with all else in Tuscany, are possessions of Duke Alessandro's.

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They can raise no question as to how he "ought" to deal with them, for to your chattels, whether they be your finger rings or your subjects or your pomatum pots or the fair quires whereon you indite your verses, you cannot rationally be said to "owe" anything. . . . No, the Duke is but a spirited lad in quest of amusement: and Guido and Graciosa are the playthings with which, on this fine sunlit morning, he attempts to divert himself.

This much being granted — and confessed, — we let the play begin.

DUMBARTON GRANGE

June, 1921

[“Alessandro de Medici is generally styled by the Italian authors the first duke of Florence; but in this they are not strictly accurate. His title of duke was derived from Città, or Cività di Penna, and had been assumed by him several years before he obtained the direction of the Florentine state. It must also be observed, that, after the evasion of Eglamore, Duke Alessandro did not, as Robertson observes, ‘enjoy the same absolute dominion as his family have retained to the present times’ (Hist. Charles V. book v.), he being only declared chief or prince of the republic, and his authority being in some measure counteracted or restrained by two councils chosen from the citizens, for life, one of which consisted of forty-eight, and the other of two hundred members. (Varchi, Storia Fior. p. 497: Nerli, Com. lib. xi. pp. 257, 264.)”]

THE JEWEL MERCHANTS

"Diamente nè smeraldo nè zaffino."

Originally produced by the Little Theatre League of
Richmond, Virginia, at the Binford High School Audi-
torium, 22 February 1921.

ORIGINAL CAST

GRACIOSA Elinor Fry

Daughter of Balthazar Valori

GUIDO Roderick Maybee

A jewel merchant

ALESSANDRO DE MEDICI Francis F. Bierne

Duke of Florence

Produced under the direction of Louise Burleigh.

THE play begins with the sound of a woman's voice
singing a song (adapted from Rossetti's version)
which is delivered to the accompaniment of a lute.

SONG

Let me have dames and damsels richly clad
To feed and tend my mirth,
Singing by day and night to make me glad.

Let me have fruitful gardens of great girth
Filled with the strife of birds,
With water-springs and beasts that house i' the earth.

Let me seem Solomon for lore of words,
Samson for strength, for beauty Absalom.

Knights as my serfs be given;
And as I will, let music go and come,
Till, when I will, I will to enter Heaven.

As the singing ends, the curtain rises upon a corner of Balthazar Valori's garden near the northern border of Tuscany. The garden is walled. There is a shrine in the wall: the tortured figure upon the crucifix is conspicuous. To the right stands a rather high-backed stone bench: by mounting

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from the seat to the top of the bench it is possible to scale the wall. To the left a crimson pennant on a pole shows against the sky. The period is 1533, and a few miles southward the Florentines, after three years of formally recognizing Jesus Christ as the sole lord and king of Florence, have lately altered matters as profoundly as was possible by electing Alessandro de Medici to be their Duke.

GRACIOSA is seated upon the bench, with a lute. The girl is, to our modern taste, very quaintly dressed in gold-colored satin, with a short tight bodice, cut square and low at the neck, and with long full skirts. When she stands erect, her preposterous "flowing" sleeves, lined with sky blue, reach to the ground. Her blonde hair, of which she has a great deal, is braided, in the intricate early sixteenth fashion, under a jeweled cap and a veil the exact color of this hair.

There is a call. Smiling, GRACIOSA answers this call by striking her lute. She pats straight her hair and gown, and puts aside the instrument. GUIDO appears at the top of the wall. All you can see of the handsome young fellow, in this posture, is that he wears a green skull-cap and a dark blue smock, the slashed sleeves of which are lined with green.

GUIDO

Ah, madonna. . . .

GRACIOSA

Welcome, Ser Guido. Your journey has been brief.

GUIDO

It has not seemed brief to me.

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GRACIOSA

Why, it was only three days ago you told me it would be a fortnight before you came this way again.

GUIDO

Yes, but I did not then know that each day spent apart from you, Madonna Graciosa, would be a century in passing.

GRACIOSA

Dear me, but your search must have been desperate!

GUIDO

(Who speaks, as almost always hereinafter, with sober enjoyment of the fact that he is stating the exact truth unintelligibly.) Yes, my search is desperate.

GRACIOSA

Did you find gems worthy of your search?

GUIDO

Very certainly, since at my journey's end I find Madonna Graciosa, the chief jewel of Tuscany.

GRACIOSA

Such compliments, Guido, make your speech less like a merchant's than a courtier's.

GUIDO

Ah, well, to balance that, you will presently find courtiers in Florence who will barter for you like merchants. May I descend?

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GRACIOSA

Yes, if you have something of interest to show me.

GUIDO

Am I to be welcomed merely for the sake of my gems? You were more gracious, you were more beautifully like your lovely name, on the fortunate day that I first encountered you . . . only six weeks ago, and only yonder, where the path crosses the highway. But now that I esteem myself your friend, you greet me like a stranger. You do not even invite me into your garden. I much prefer the manner in which you told me the way to the inn when I was an unknown passer-by. And yet your pennant promised a welcoming.

GRACIOSA

(*With the smile of an exceptionally candid angel.*) Ah, Guido, I flew it the very minute the boy from the inn brought me your message!

GUIDO

Now, there is the welcome I had hoped for! But how do you escape your father's watch so easily?

GRACIOSA

My father has no need to watch me in this lonely hill castle. Ever since I can remember I have wandered at will in the forest. My father knows that to me every path is as familiar as one of the corridors in his house; and in no one of them did I ever meet anybody except charcoal-burners,

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and sometimes a nun from the convent, and — oh, yes! — you. But descend, friend Guido.

Thus encouraged, GUIDO descends from the top of the wall to the top of the bench, and thence, via its seat, to the ground. You are thereby enabled to discover that his nether portions are clad in dark blue tights and soft leather shoes with pointed turned-up toes. It is also noticeable that he carries a jewel pack of purple, which, when opened, reveals an orange lining.

GUIDO

(With as much irony as the pleasure he takes in being again with this dear child permits.) That “Oh, yes, you!” is a very fitting reward for my devotion. For I find that nowadays I travel about the kingdom buying jewels less for my patrons at court than for the pleasure of having your eyes appraise them, and smile at me.

GRACIOSA

(With the condescension of a great lady.) Guido, you have in point of fact been very kind to me, and very amusing, too, in my loneliness on the top of this hill. *(Drawing back the sleeve from her left arm, she reveals the trinket there.)* See, here is the turquoise bracelet I had from you the second time you passed. I wear it always — secretly.

GUIDO

That is wise, for the turquoise is a talisman. They say that the woman who wears a turquoise is thereby assured of marrying the person whom she prefers.

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GRACIOSA

I do not know about that, nor do I expect to have much choice as to what rich nobleman marries me, but I know that I love this bracelet —

GUIDO

In fact, they are handsome stones.

GRACIOSA

Because it reminds me constantly of the hours which I have spent here with my lute —

GUIDO

Oh, with your lute!

GRACIOSA

And with your pack of lovely jewels —

GUIDO

Yes, to be sure! with my jewels.

GRACIOSA

And with you.

GUIDO

There is again my gracious lady. Now, in reward for that, you shall feast your eyes.

GRACIOSA

(All eagerness.) And what have you to-day?

GUIDO *opens his pack. She bends above it with hands outstretched.*

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GUIDO

(*Taking out a necklace.*) For one thing, pearls, black pearls, set with a clasp of emeralds. See! They will become you.

GRACIOSA

(*Taking them, pressing them to her cheek.*) How cool! But I — poor child of a poor noble — I cannot afford them.

GUIDO

Oh, I did not mean to offer them to you to-day. No, this string is intended for the Duke's favorite, Count Eglamore.

GRACIOSA

(*Stiffening.*) Count Eglamore! These are for him?

GUIDO

For Count Eglamore.

GRACIOSA

Has the upstart such taste?

GUIDO

If it be taste to appreciate pearls, then the Duke's chief officer has excellent taste. He seeks them far and wide. He will be very generous in paying for this string.

GRACIOSA *drops the pearls, in which she no longer delights. She returns to the bench, and sits down, and speaks with a sort of disappointment.*

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GRACIOSA

I am sorry to learn that this Eglamore is among your patrons.

GUIDO

(Still half engrossed by the contents of his pack. The man loves jewels equally for their value and their beauty.)
Oh, the nobles complain of him, but we merchants have no quarrel with Eglamore. He buys too lavishly.

GRACIOSA

Do you think only of buying and selling, Guido?

GUIDO

It is a pursuit not limited to us who frankly live by sale and purchase. Count Eglamore, for example, knows that men may be bought as readily as merchandise. It is one reason why he is so hated — by the unbought.

GRACIOSA

(Irritated by the title.) Count Eglamore, indeed! I ask in my prayers every night that some honest gentleman may contrive to cut the throat of this abominable creature.

GUIDO

(His hand going to his throat.) You pray too much, madonna. Even very pious people ought to be reasonable.

GRACIOSA

(Rising from the bench.) Have I not reason to hate the man who killed my kinsman?

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GUIDO

(*Rising from his gems.*) The Marquis of Cibo conspired, or so the court judged —

GRACIOSA

I know nothing of the judgment. But it was this Eglamore who discovered the plot, if there indeed was any plot, and who sent my cousin Cibo to a death — (*pointing to the shrine*) — oh, to a death as horrible as that. So I hate him.

GUIDO

Yet you have never even seen him, I believe?

GRACIOSA

And it would be better for him never to see me or any of my kin. My father, my uncles and my cousins have all sworn to kill him —

GUIDO

So I have gathered. They remain among the unbought.

GRACIOSA

(*Returning, sits upon the bench, and speaks regretfully.*) But they have never any luck. Cousin Pietro contrived to have a beam dropped on Eglamore's head, and it missed him by not half a foot —

GUIDO

Ah, yes, I remember.

GRACIOSA

And Cousin Giorgio stabbed him in the back one night, but the coward had on chain-armor under his finery —

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GUIDO

I remember that also.

GRACIOSA

And Uncle Lorenzo poisoned his soup, but a pet dog got at it first. That was very unfortunate.

GUIDO

Yes, the dog seemed to think so, I remember.

GRACIOSA

However, perseverance is always rewarded. So I still hope that one or another of my kinsmen will contrive to kill this Eglamore before I go to court.

GUIDO

(*Sits at her feet.*) Has my Lord Balthazar yet set a day for that presentation?

GRACIOSA

Not yet.

GUIDO

I wish to have this Eglamore's accounts all settled by that date.

GRACIOSA

But in three months, Guido, I shall be sixteen. My sisters went to court when they were sixteen.

GUIDO

In fact, a noble who is not rich cannot afford to continue supporting a daughter who is salable in marriage.

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GRACIOSA

No, of course not. (*She speaks in the most matter-of-fact tone possible. Then, more impulsively, the girl slips down from the bench, and sits by him on the ground.*) Do you think I shall make as good a match as my sisters, Guido? Do you think some great rich nobleman will marry me very soon? And shall I like the court? What shall I see there?

GUIDO

Marvels. I think — yes, I am afraid that you will like them.

GRACIOSA

And Duke Alessandro — shall I like him?

GUIDO

Few courtiers have expressed dislike of him in my presence.

GRACIOSA

Do you like him? Does he too buy lavishly?

GUIDO

Eh, madonna! some day, when you have seen his jewels —

GRACIOSA

Oh! I shall see them when I go to court?

GUIDO

Yes, he will show them to you, I think, without fail, for the Duke loves beauty in all its forms. So he will take

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pleasure in confronting the brightness of your eyes with the brightness of the four kinds of sapphires, of the twelve kinds of rubies, and of many extraordinary pearls —

GRACIOSA

(*With eyes shining, and lips parted.*) Oh!

GUIDO

And you will see his famous emerald necklace, and all his diamonds, and his huge turquoises, which will make you ashamed of your poor talisman —

GRACIOSA

He will show all these jewels to me!

GUIDO

(*Looking at her, and still smiling thoughtfully.*) He will show you the very finest of his gems, assuredly. And then, worse still, he will be making verses in your honor.

GRACIOSA

It would be droll to have a great duke making songs about me!

GUIDO

It is a preposterous feature of Duke Alessandro's character that he is always making songs about some beautiful thing or another.

GRACIOSA

Such strange songs, Guido! I was singing over one of them just before you came, —

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Let me have dames and damsels richly clad
To feed and tend my mirth,
Singing by day and night to make me glad —

But I could not quite understand it. Are his songs thought good?

GUIDO

The songs of a reigning duke are always good.

GRACIOSA

And is he, too, as good as people report?

GUIDO

Tastes differ, of course —

GRACIOSA

And is he as handsome?

GUIDO

I have a portrait of the Duke. It does not, I think, unduly flatter him. Will you look at it?

GRACIOSA

Yes, with both eyes.

GUIDO

(*Drawing out a miniature on a chain.*) Here is the likeness.

GRACIOSA

Yet how should you, who are but a merchant — ?

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GUIDO

(*Seeing her surprise.*) Oh, it was a gift to me from his highness for a special service I did him, and as such must be treasured.

GRACIOSA

Perhaps, then, I shall see you at court, Messer Guido, who are the friend of princes?

GUIDO

If you do, I ask only that in noisy Florence you remember this quiet garden.

GRACIOSA

(*Looks at him silently, then glances at the portrait. She speaks with evident disappointment.*) Is this the Duke?

GUIDO

You may see his arms on it, and on the back his inscription.

GRACIOSA

Yes, but — (*looking at the portrait again*) — but . . . he is . . . so . . .

GUIDO

You are astonished at his highness' coloring? That he inherits from his mother. She was, you know, a blackamoor.

GRACIOSA

And my sisters wrote me he was like a god!

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GUIDO

Such observations are court etiquette.

GRACIOSA

(*With an outburst of disgust.*) Take it back! Though how can you bear to look at it, much more to have it touching you! And only yesterday I was angry because I had not seen the Duke riding past!

GUIDO

Seen him! here! riding past!

GRACIOSA

Old Ursula told me that the Duke had gone by with twenty men, riding down toward the convent at the border. And I flung my sewing-bag straight at her head because she had not called me.

GUIDO

That was idle gossip, I fancy. The Duke rarely rides abroad without my — (*he stops*) — without my lavish patron Eglamore, the friend of all honest merchants.

GRACIOSA

But that abominable Eglamore may have been with him. I heard nothing to the contrary.

GUIDO

True, madonna, true. I had forgotten you did not see them.

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GRACIOSA

No. What is he like, this Eglamore? Is he as appalling to look at as the Duke?

GUIDO

Madonna! but wise persons do not apply such adjectives to dukes. And wise persons do not criticize Count Eglamore's appearance, either, now that Eglamore is indispensable to the all-powerful Duke of Florence.

GRACIOSA

Indispensable?

GUIDO

It is thanks to the Eglamore whom you hate that the Duke has ample leisure to indulge in recreations which are reputed to be — curious.

GRACIOSA

I do not understand you, Guido.

GUIDO

That is perhaps quite as well. (*Attempting to explain as much as is decently expressible.*) To be brief, madonna, all business of state annoys the Duke.

GRACIOSA

But why?

GUIDO

It would interfere with his pursuit of all the beautiful things he asks for in that song.

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GRACIOSA

Yet how does that make Eglamore indispensable?

GUIDO

Eglamore is an industrious person who affixes seals, and signs treaties, and musters armies, and collects revenues, upon the whole, quite as efficiently as Alessandro would be capable of doing these things.

GRACIOSA

So Duke Alessandro merely makes verses?

GUIDO

And otherwise amuses himself as his inclinations prompt, while Eglamore rules Tuscany — and the Tuscans are none the worse off on account of it. (*He rises, and his hand goes to the dagger at his belt.*) But is not that a horseman?

GRACIOSA

(*She too has risen, and is now standing on the bench, looking over the wall.*) A solitary rider, far down by the convent, so far away that he seems hardly larger than a scarlet dragon-fly.

GUIDO

I confess I wish to run no risk of being found here, by your respected father or by your ingenious cousins and uncles.

GRACIOSA •

(*She turns, but remains standing upon the bench.*) I think your Duke is much more dangerous looking than any

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of them. Heigho! I can quite foresee that I shall never fall in love with this Duke.

GUIDO

A prince has means to overcome all obstacles.

GRACIOSA

No. It is unbefitting and a little cowardly for Duke Alessandro to shirk the duties of his station for verse-making and eternal pleasure-seeking. Now if I were Duke —

GUIDO

What would you do?

GRACIOSA

(*Posturing a little as she stands upon the bench.*) If I were duke? Oh . . . I would grant my father a pension . . . and I would have Eglamore hanged . . . and I would purchase a new gown of silvery green —

GUIDO

In which you would be very ravishingly beautiful.

His tone has become rather ardent, and he is now standing nearer to her than the size of the garden necessitates. So GRACIOSA demurely steps down from the bench, and sits at the far end.

GRACIOSA

And that is all I can think of. What would you do if you were duke, Messer Guido?

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GUIDO

(Who is now sitting beside her at closer quarters than the length of the bench quite strictly demands.) I? What would I do if I were a great lord instead of a tradesman? *(Softly.)* I think you know the answer, madonna.

GRACIOSA

Oh, you would make me your duchess, of course. That is quite understood. But I was speaking seriously, Guido.

GUIDO

And is it not a serious matter that a pedler of crystals should have dared to love a nobleman's daughter?

GRACIOSA

(Delighted.) This is the first I have heard of it.

GUIDO

But you are perfectly right. It is not a serious matter. That I worship you is an affair which does not seriously concern any person save me in any way whatsoever. Yet I think that knowledge of the fact would put your father to the trouble of sharpening his dagger.

GRACIOSA

Ye-es. But not even Father would deny that you were showing excellent taste.

GUIDO

Indeed, I am not certain that I do worship you; for in order to adore whole-heartedly the idolater must believe his

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idol to be perfect. (*Taking her hand.*) Now your nails are of an ugly shape, like that of little fans. Your nose is nothing to boast of. And your mouth is too large. I do not admire these faults, for faults they are undoubtedly —

GRACIOSA

Do they make me very ugly? I know that I have not a really good mouth, Guido, but do you think it is positively repulsive?

GUIDO

No. . . . Then, too, I know that you are vain and self-seeking, and look forward contentedly to the time when your father will transfer his ownership of your physical attractions to that nobleman who offers the highest price for them.

GRACIOSA

But we daughters of the poor Valori are compelled to marry — suitably. We have only the choice between that and the convent yonder.

GUIDO

That is true, and nobody disputes it. Still, you participate in a monstrous bargain, and I would prefer to have you exhibit distaste for it.

Bending forward, GUIDO draws from his jewel pack the string of pearls, and this he moodily contemplates, in order to evince his complete disinterestedness. The pose has its effect. GRACIOSA looks at him for a moment, rises, draws a deep breath, and speaks with a sort of humility.

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GRACIOSA

And to what end, Guido? What good would weeping do?

GUIDO

(*Smiling whimsically.*) I am afraid that men do not always love according to the strict laws of logic. (*He drops the pearls, and, rising, follows her.*) I desire your happiness above all things, yet to see you so abysmally untroubled by anything which troubles me is — another matter.

GRACIOSA

But I am not untroubled, Guido.

GUIDO

No?

GRACIOSA

No. (*Rather tremulously.*) Sometimes I sit here dreading my life at court. I want never to leave my father's bleak house. I fear that I may not like the man who offers the highest price for me. And it seems as if the court were a horrible painted animal, dressed in bright silks, and shining with jewels, and waiting to devour me.

Beyond the wall appears a hat of scarlet satin with a divided brim, which, rising, is revealed to surmount the head of an extraordinarily swarthy person, to whose dark skin much powder has only loaned the hue of death: his cheeks, however, are vividly carmined. This is all that the audience can now see of the young DUKE of FLORENCE, whose proximity the two in the garden are just now too much engrossed to notice.

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The DUKE looks from one to the other. His eyes narrow, his teeth are displayed in a wide grin; he now understands the situation. He lowers his head as GRACIOSA moves.

GRACIOSA

No, I am not untroubled. For I cannot fathom you, and that troubles me. I am very fond of you — and yet I do not trust you.

GUIDO

You know that I love you.

GRACIOSA

You tell me so. It pleases me to have you say it —

GUIDO

Madonna is candid this morning.

GRACIOSA

Yes, I am candid. It does please me. And I know that for the sake of seeing me you endanger your life, for if my father heard of our meetings here he would have you killed.

GUIDO

Would I incur such risks without caring?

GRACIOSA

No, — and yet, somehow, I do not believe it is altogether for me that you care.

The DUKE laughs. GUIDO starts, half drawing his dagger. GRACIOSA turns with an instinctive gesture of seeking

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protection. The DUKE's head and shoulders appear above the wall.

THE DUKE

And you will find, my friend, that the most charming women have just these awkward intuitions.

The DUKE ascends the wall, while the two stand motionless and silent. When he is on top of the wall, GUIDO, who now remembers that omnipotence perches there, makes haste to serve it, and obsequiously assists the DUKE to descend. The DUKE then comes well forward, in smiling meditation, and hands first his gloves, then his scarlet cloak (which you now perceive to be lined with ermine and sable in four stripes) to GUIDO, who takes them as a servant would attend his master.

The removal of this cloak reveals the DUKE to be clad in a scarlet satin doublet, which has a high military collar and sleeves puffed with black. His tights also are of scarlet, and he wears shining soft black riding-boots. Jewels glisten at his neck. About his middle, too, there is a metallic gleaming, for he is equipped with a noticeably long sword and a dagger. Such is the personage who now addresses himself more explicitly to GRACIOSA.

THE DUKE

(Sitting upon the bench, very much at his ease while the others stand uncomfortably before him.) Yes, madonna, I suspect that Eglamore here cares greatly for the fact that you are Balthazar Valori's daughter, and cousin to the late Marquis of Cibo.

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GRACIOSA

(*Just in bewilderment.*) Eglamore!

THE DUKE

For Cibo left many kinsmen. These still resent the circumstance that the matching of his wits against Eglamore's wits earned for Cibo an unpleasantly public death-bed. So they pursue their feud against Eglamore with vexatious industry. And Eglamore goes about in hourly apprehension of another falling beam, another knife-thrust in the back, or another plate of poison.

GRACIOSA

(*She comprehends now.*) Eglamore!

THE DUKE

(*Who is pleased alike by Eglamore's neat plan and by his own cleverness in unriddling it.*) But if rich Eglamore should make a stolen match with you, your father — good thrifty man! — could be appeased without much trouble. Your cousins, those very angry but penniless Valori, would not stay over-obdurate to a kinsman who had at his disposal so many pensions and public offices. Honor would permit a truce with their new cousin Eglamore, a truce very profitable to everybody.

GRACIOSA

He said they must be bought somehow!

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THE DUKE

Yes, Eglamore could bind them all to his interest within ten days. All could be bought at a stroke by marrying you. And Eglamore would be rid of the necessity of sleeping in chain armor. Have I not unraveled the scheme correctly, Eglamore?

GUIDO

(*Smiling and deferential.*) Your highness was never lacking in penetration.

GRACIOSA, *at this, turns puzzled from one man to the other.*

GRACIOSA

But you — ?

THE DUKE

I am Alessandro de Medici, madonna.

GRACIOSA

The Duke!

THE DUKE

A most neglected duke; a duke who wondered over the long absences of a truant chancellor, and set spies upon him. Eglamore here will attest as much — (*As GRACIOSA draws away from GUIDO*) — or, if you cannot believe Eglamore any longer in anything, I shall have other witnesses within the half-hour. Yes, my twenty cut-throats are fetching back for me a brace of nuns from the convent yonder. I can imagine that, just now, my cut-throats will

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be in your opinion more trustworthy witnesses than is poor Eglamore. And my stout knaves will presently assure you that I am, in every way, a Medici.

GUIDO

(*Suavely.*) It happens that not a moment ago we were admiring your highness' portrait.

GRACIOSA

And so you are Count Eglamore. That is very strange. So it was the hand of Eglamore (*rubbing her hands as if to clean them*) that I touched just now. I thought it was the hand of my friend Guido. But I forget. There is no Guido. You are Eglamore. It is strange you should have been capable of so much wickedness, for to me you seem only a smirking and harmless lackey.

The DUKE is watching as if at a play. He is æsthetically pleased by the girl's anguish. GUIDO winces. As GRACIOSA begins again to speak, they turn facing her, so that to the audience the faces of both men are invisible.

GRACIOSA

And it was you who detected — so you said — the Marquis of Cibo's conspiracy. Tebaldeo was my cousin, Count Eglamore. I loved him. We were reared together. We used to play here in this garden. I remember how Tebaldeo once fetched me a wren's nest from that maple yonder. I stood just here. I was weeping, because I was afraid he would fall. If he had fallen, if he had been killed then, it would

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have been the luckier for him. They say that he conspired. I do not know. I only know that by your orders, Count Eglamore, my playmate Tebaldeo was fastened to a cross, like that (*pointing to the shrine*). I know that his arms and legs were each broken in two places with an iron bar. I know that this cross was then set upon a pivot, so that it turned slowly. I know that my dear Tebaldeo died very slowly in the sunlit market-place, while the cross turned, and turned, and turned. I know this was a public holiday; the shopkeepers took holiday to watch him die, the boy who fetched me a wren's nest from yonder maple. And I know that you are Eglamore, who ordered these things done.

GUIDO

I gave orders for the Marquis of Cibo's execution, as was the duty of my office. I did not devise the manner of his punishment. The punishment for Cibo's crime was long ago fixed by our laws. All who attack the Duke's person must die thus.

GRACIOSA

(*Waves his excuses aside.*) And then you plan this masquerade. You plan to make me care for you so greatly that even when I know you to be Count Eglamore I must still care for you. You plan to marry me, so as to placate Tebaldeo's kinsmen, so as to leave them — in your huckster's phrase — no longer unbought. It was a fine bold stroke of policy, I know, to use me as a stepping-stone to safety. But was it fair to me?

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GUIDO

Graciosa . . . you shame me —

GRACIOSA

Look you, Count Eglamore, I was only a child, playing here, alone, and not unhappy. Oh, was it fair, was it worth while to match your skill against my ignorance?

THE DUKE

Fie, Donna Graciosa, you must not be too harsh with Eglamore —

GRACIOSA

Think how unhappy I would be if even now I loved you, and how I would loathe myself!

THE DUKE

It is his nature to scheme, and he weaves his plots as inevitably as the spider does her web —

GRACIOSA

But I am getting angry over nothing. Nothing has happened except that I have dreamed — of a Guido. And there is no Guido. There is only an Eglamore, a lackey in attendance upon his master.

THE DUKE

Believe me, it is wiser to forget this clever lackey — as I do — except when there is need of his services. I think that you have no more need to consider him —

He takes the girl's hand. GRACIOSA now looks at him as

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though seeing him for the first time. She is vaguely frightened by this predatory beast, but in the main her emotion is as yet bewilderment.

THE DUKE

For you are very beautiful, Graciosa. You are as slim as a lily, and more white. Your eyes are two purple mirrors in each of which I see a tiny image of Duke Alessandro. (GUIDO takes a step forward, and the DUKE now addresses him affably.) Those nuns they are fetching me are big high-colored wenches with cheeks like apples. It is not desirable that women should be so large. Such women do not inspire a poet. Women should be little creatures that fear you. They should have thin plaintive voices, and in shrinking from you should be as slight to the touch as a cobweb. It is not possible to draw inspiration from a woman's beauty unless you comprehend how easy it would be to murder her.

GUIDO

(Softly, without expression.) God, God!

The DUKE looks with delight at GRACIOSA, who stands bewildered and childlike.

THE DUKE

You fear me, do you not, Graciosa? Your hand is soft and cold as the skin of a viper. When I touch it you shudder. I am very tired of women who love me, of women who are infatuated by my beauty. You, I can see, are not infatuated. To you my touch will always be a martyrdom, you will always loathe me. And therefore I shall not

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weary of you for a long while, because the misery and the helplessness of my lovely victim will incite me to make very lovely verses.

He draws her to the bench, sitting beside her.

THE DUKE

Yes, Graciosa, you will inspire me. Your father shall have all the wealth and state that even his greedy imaginings can devise, so long as you can contrive to loathe me. We will find you a suitable husband — say, in Eglamore here. You shall have flattery and titles, gold and fine glass, soft stuffs and superb palaces and many lovely jewels —

The DUKE glances down at the pedler's pack.

THE DUKE

But Eglamore also has been wooing you with jewels. You must see mine, dear Graciosa.

GRACIOSA

(Without expression.) Count Eglamore said that I must.

THE DUKE

(Raises the necklace, and lets it drop contemptuously.)

Oh, not such trumpery as this. I have in Florence gems which have not their fellows anywhere, gems which have not even a name, and the value of which is incalculable. I have jewels engendered by the thunder, jewels taken from the heart of the Arabian deer. I have jewels cut from the brain of a toad, and from the eyes of serpents. I have jewels which are authentically known to have fallen from the

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moon. Well, we will select the rarest, and have a pair of slippers encrusted with them, and in these slippers you shall dance for me, in a room that I know of —

GUIDO

(*Without moving.*) Highness — !

THE DUKE

It will all be very amusing, for I think that she is now quite innocent, as pure as the high angels. Yes, it will be diverting to make her as I am. It will be an atrocious action that will inspire me to write lovelier verses than even I have ever written.

GUIDO

She is a child —

THE DUKE

Yes, yes, a frightened child who cannot speak, who stays as still as a lark that has been taken in a snare. Why, neither of her sisters can compare with this, and, besides, the elder one had a quite ugly mole upon her thigh — But that old rogue Balthazar Valori has a real jewel to offer, this time. Well, I will buy it.

GUIDO

Highness, I love this child —

THE DUKE

Ah, then you cannot ever be her husband. You would have suited otherwise. But we will find some other person of discretion —

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For a moment the two men regard each other in silence. The DUKE becomes aware that he is being opposed. His brows contract a little, but he rises from the bench rather as if in meditation than in anger. Then GUIDO drops the cloak and gloves he has been holding until this. His lackeyship is over.

GUIDO

No!

THE DUKE

My friend, some long-faced people say you made a beast of me —

GUIDO

No, I will not have it.

THE DUKE

So do you beware lest the beast turn and rend you.

GUIDO

I have never been too nice to profit by your vices. I have taken my thrifty toll of abomination. I have stood by contentedly, not urging you on, yet never trying to stay you as you waded deeper and ever deeper into the filth of your debaucheries, because meanwhile you left me so much power.

THE DUKE

Would you reshape your handiwork more piously? Come, come, man, be content with it as I am. And be content with the kingdom I leave you to play with.

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GUIDO

It was not altogether I who made of you a brain-sick beast. But what you are is in part my handiwork. Nevertheless, you shall not harm this child.

THE DUKE

“Shall not” is a delightfully quaint expression. I only regret that you are not likely ever to use it to me again.

GUIDO

I know this means my ruin.

THE DUKE

Indeed, I must venture to remind you, Count Eglamore, that I am still a ruling prince —

GUIDO

That is nothing to me.

THE DUKE

And that, where you are master of very admirable sentiments, I happen to be master of all Tuscany.

GUIDO

At court you are the master. At your court in Florence I have seen many mothers raise the veil from their daughters' faces because you were passing. But here upon this hill-top I can see only the woman I love and the man who has insulted her.

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THE DUKE

So all the world is changed, and Pandarus is transformed into Hector! Your words are very sonorous words, dear Eglamore, but by what deeds do you propose to back them?

GUIDO

By killing you, your highness.

THE DUKE

But in what manner? By stifling me with virtuous rhetoric? Hah, it is rather awkward for you — is it not — that our sumptuary laws forbid you merchants to carry swords?

GUIDO

(*Draws his dagger.*) I think this knife will serve me, highness, to make earth a cleaner place.

THE DUKE

(*Drawing his long sword.*) It would save trouble now to split you like a chicken for roasting . . . (*He shrugs, and sheathes his sword. He unbuckles his sword-belt, and lays it aside.*) No, no, this farce ascends in interest. So let us play it fairly to the end. I risk nothing, since from this moment you are useless to me, my rebellious lackey —

GUIDO

You risk your life, for very certainly I mean to kill you.

THE DUKE

Two go to every bargain, my friend. Now, if I kill you, it is always diverting to kill; and if by any chance you

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should kill me, I shall at least be rid of the intolerable knowledge that to-morrow will be just like to-day.

He draws his dagger. The two men engage warily but with determination, the DUKE presently advancing. GUIDO steps backward, and in the act trips over the pedler's pack, and falls prostrate. His dagger flies from his hand. GRACIOSA, with a little cry, has covered her face. Nobody strikes an attitude, because nobody is conscious of any need to be heroic, but there is a perceptible silence, which is broken by the DUKE's quiet voice.

THE DUKE

Well! am I to be kept waiting forever? You were quicker in obeying my caprices yesterday. Get up, you muddy lout, and let us kill each other with some pretension of adroitness.

GUIDO

(Rising, with a sob.) Ah!

He catches up the fallen dagger, and attacks the DUKE, this time with utter disregard of the rules of fence and his own safety. GUIDO drives the DUKE back. GUIDO is careless of defence, and desirous only to kill. The DUKE is wounded, and falls with a cry at the foot of the shrine. GUIDO utters a sort of strangled growl. He raises his dagger, intending to hack at and mutilate his antagonist, who is now unconscious. As GUIDO stoops, GRACIOSA, from behind him, catches his arm.

GRACIOSA

He gave you your life.

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GUIDO *turns. He drops the weapon. He speaks with great gentleness, almost with weariness.*

GUIDO

Madonna, the Duke is not yet dead. That wound is nothing serious.

GRACIOSA

He spared your life.

GUIDO

It is impossible to let him live.

GRACIOSA

But I think he only voiced a caprice —

GUIDO

I think so, too, but I know that all this madman's whims are ruthless.

GRACIOSA

But you have power —

GUIDO

Power! I, who have attacked the Duke's person! I, who have done what your dead cousin merely planned to do!

GRACIOSA

Guido — !

GUIDO

Living, this brain-sick beast will make of you his plaything — and, a little later, his broken, soiled and cast-by

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plaything. It is therefore necessary that I kill Duke Alessandro.

GRACIOSA *moves away from him, and GUIDO rises.*

GRACIOSA

And afterward — and afterward you must die just as Tebaldeo died!

GUIDO

That is the law, madonna. But what he said is true. I am useless to him, a rebellious lackey to be punished. Whether I have his life or no, I am a lost man.

GRACIOSA

A moment since you were Count Eglamore, whom all our nobles feared —

GUIDO

Now there is not a beggar in the kingdom who would change lots with me. But at least I shall first kill this kingdom's lord.

He picks up his dagger.

GRACIOSA

You are a friendless and hunted man, in peril of a dreadful death. But even so, you are not penniless. These jewels here are of great value —

GUIDO *laughs, and hangs the pearls about her neck.*

GUIDO

Do you keep them, then.

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GRACIOSA

There is a world outside this kingdom. You have only to make your way through the forest to be out of Tuscany.

GUIDO

(*Coolly reflective.*) Perhaps I might escape, going north to Bologna, and then to Venice, which is at war with the Duke —

GRACIOSA

I can tell you the path to Bologna.

GUIDO

But first the Duke must die, because his death saves you.

GRACIOSA

No, Guido! I would have Eglamore go hence with hands as clean as possible.

GUIDO

Not even Eglamore would leave you at the mercy of this poet.

GRACIOSA

How does that matter? It is no secret that my father intends to market me as best suits his interests. And the great Duke of Florence, no less, would have been my purchaser! You heard him. "I will buy this jewel," he said. He would have paid thrice what any of my sisters' purchasers have paid. You know very well that my father would have been delighted.

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GUIDO

(*Since the truth of what she has just said is known to him by more startling proofs than she dreams of, he speaks rather bitterly, as he sheathes the dagger.*) And I must need upset the bargain between these jewel merchants!

GRACIOSA

(*Lightly.*) "No, I will not have it!" Count Eglamore must cry. (*Her hand upon his arm.*) My dear unthrifty pedler! it cost you a great deal to speak those words.

GUIDO

I had no choice. I love you. (*A pause. As GRACIOSA does not speak, GUIDO continues, very quiet at first.*) It is a theme on which I shall not embroider. So long as I thought to use you as an instrument I could woo fluently enough. To-day I saw that you were frightened and helpless—oh, quite helpless. And something in me changed. I knew for the first time that I loved you. And I knew I was not clean as you are clean. And I knew that I had more in common with this beast here than I had with you.

GRACIOSA

(*Who with feminine practicality, while the man talks, has reached her decision.*) We daughters of the Valori are so much merchandise . . . Heigho, since I cannot help it, since bought and sold I must be, one day or another, at least I will go at a noble price. Yet I do not think I am quite

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worth the wealth and power which you have given up because of me. So it will be necessary to make up the difference, dear, by loving you very much.

GUIDO *takes her hands, only half believing that he understands her meaning. He puts an arm about her shoulder, holding her at a distance, the better to see her face.*

GUIDO

You, who had only scorn to give me when I was a kingdom's master! Would you go with me now that I am homeless and friendless?

GRACIOSA

(*Archly.*) But to me you do not seem quite friendless.

GUIDO

Graciosa — !

GRACIOSA

And I doubt if you could ever find your way through the forest alone. (*But as she stands there with one hand raised to each of his shoulders her vindication is self-revealed, and she indicates her bracelet rather indignantly.*) Besides, what else is a poor maid to do, when she is burdened with a talisman that compels her to marry the man whom she — so very much — prefers?

GUIDO

(*Drawing her to him.*) Ah, you shall not regret that foolish preference.

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GRACIOSA

But come! There is a path — (*They are gathering up the pack and its contents, as GUIDO pauses by the DUKE.*) Is he — ?

GUIDO

He will not enter Hell to-day. (*The DUKE stirs.*) Already he revives, you see. So let us begone before his attendants come.

GUIDO *lifts her to the top of the wall. He lifts up the pack.*

GRACIOSA

My lute!

GUIDO

(*Giving it to her.*) So we may pass for minstrels on the road to Venice.

GRACIOSA

Yes, singing the Duke's songs to pay our way. (*GUIDO climbs over the wall, and stands on the far side, examining the landscape beneath.*) Horsemen!

GUIDO

The Duke's attendants fetching him new women — two more of those numerous damsels that his song demands. They will revive this ruinous songmaker to rule over Tuscany more foolishly than Eglamore governed when Eglamore was a great lord. (*He speaks pensively, still looking down.*) It is a very rich and lovely country, this kingdom which a half-hour since lay in the hollow of my hand. Now I am empty-handed.

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GRACIOSA

(*With mocking reproach.*) Empty-handed!

She extends to him both her hands. GUIDO takes them, and laughs joyously, saying, "Come!" as he lifts her down.

There is a moment's silence, then is heard the song and lute-playing with which the play began, growing ever more distant: . . .

"Knights as my serfs be given;
And as I will, let music go and come."

. . . The DUKE moves. The DUKE half raises himself at the foot of the crucifix.

THE DUKE

Eglamore! I am hurt. Help me, Eglamore!

(THE CURTAIN FALLS)

AN APPENDIX
ABOUT POOR JACK

POOR JACK

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

*"What, old acquaintance! could not all
this flesh
Keep in a little life! Poor Jack, farewell!
I could have better spared a better man."*

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AN APPENDIX: ABOUT POOR JACK

§ 1

YOU HAVE seen in *The Jewel Merchants* my only conscious attempt at play-writing. But to yet another one-act play I contributed, in the autumn of 1927, without either pre-meditation or any least mental effort. . . . I refer to the mysterious *Poor Jack*, whose title-page you have just now seen, and whose advent into the field of published books is perhaps most easily explained by quoting from the New York *Herald-Tribune* of 27 November 1927:

§ 2

James H. Drake, Jr., rare-book-dealer at 14 West Fortieth Street, enormously proud of his first editions of the works of James Branch Cabell, admitted yesterday that a spurious Cabell item had been sold to him.

Mr. Drake's vexation was tempered by the knowledge that others had been victims of the deception, practiced in several cities and attempted in England also, by literary forgers. They have concocted a pamphlet and pawned it off as a Cabell play in one act, dated 1906, on scores of book-dealers, many of whom paid twenty dollars for a brochure worth nothing.

ABOUT POOR JACK

One New York book-dealer in good faith resold his copy to a particularly interested client for \$150. Other book-dealers, however, promptly communicated with Mr. Cabell, who has been receiving letters from dealers in Philadelphia, Washington, and Boston.

From his home in Richmond, Virginia, Mr. Cabell vigorously denied authorship or knowledge of the play. The forger has based the play on a short story by Cabell, lending the forgery a bit of authenticity. It was for this reason that expert booksellers were victimized.

In Mr. Drake's case a young woman entered his store and related a strange tale. Her uncle had died, she said. Her uncle had lived in Richmond and was a close friend of Cabell, she said. Among his numerous Cabell items he had left his niece the pamphlet, which she did not guarantee was written by Cabell.

But, while she did not guarantee it, she certainly believed he was the author. Thus, a prefatory note to "R. D. L." was signed "J. B. C." On the title page the legend read, "Poor Jack — A Play in One Act — Privately Printed — Richmond — 1906." There were thirty pages of reading matter. The pamphlet contains the inference that the play was dramatized from "Love-Letters of Falstaff," included in *The Line of Love*, published by Mr. Cabell in 1905.

All this circumstantial evidence impressed Mr. Drake. He was the more inclined in his visitor's favor since she did not want all cash for the volume, but would be willing to accept an Aldous Huxley first edition as part payment. The

ABOUT POOR JACK

transaction was closed, and on the departure of the woman, Mr. Drake telephoned other book-dealers, to inquire what they might know of this book.

A Lexington Avenue dealer apprised him that he had bought such a book from a young man who had told a similar story about a dead uncle. The young man's eyes were sharp and piercing, and his appearance had not pleased the book-dealer's wife, who advised her husband not to buy. He did buy, however, for twenty dollars.

Stuart Rose, editor of R. M. McBride & Co., 7 West Sixteenth Street, publishers of Mr. Cabell's works, was consulted. He communicated with Mr. Cabell, who wrote:

"Collectors should be warned that a somewhat remarkable Cabell item has recently been forged and put upon the market. It takes the form of 'Poor Jack,' a one-act play purporting to have been printed in Richmond in 1906.

"This play is based, I am told, on my short story, 'Love-Letters of Falstaff,' and while no author's name is given, there is a foreword signed J. B. C., in which the writer incorrectly refers to 'my story, The Love-Letters of Falstaff,' and somewhat misquotes a passage from 'Jurgen,' not written until 1918. The misdemeanor is perpetrated in the form of a thirty-two-page pamphlet bound in brown paper, and has to every appearance very lately been put on the market."

Both the man and the woman who sold the forgery took care not to involve themselves in possible criminal prosecution through misrepresentation. They at no time asserted Cabell was the author of the one-act play. They thought he

ABOUT POOR JACK

might be — all indications pointed to his authorship — but they disclaimed responsibility in any event. It was this reticence as much as anything which predisposed the dealers in their favor.

§ 3

Thus far the *Herald-Tribune*, at a time when I had received many letters about, but had not yet seen, this unexpected addition to my published writings. But a bit later I was privileged to acquire a copy of *Poor Jack*, as the small infamy was sold throughout the country in the October and November of 1927, owing to that epidemic of dead uncles. . . . For in no place did the tale of its vendors vary. Nowhere between Georgia and Boston and San Francisco had the putative deceased owner of the pamphlet been a grandfather or an aunt or a cousin: in every bookshop he was an uncle. In the upshot this enterprising pair of swindlers turned out to have possessed between them an even hundred uncles, each one of whom had been a dear friend of mine, and each one of whom had died in the early autumn of 1927 leaving precisely one copy of *Poor Jack* in his library.

The play itself I found to consist merely of the dialogue in Love-Letters of Falstaff, but not as this tale was published in 1905. Instead, the dialogue was all taken word for word, and without any least change, from the quite different revised version of the Kalki edition as published in 1921. That revelatory carelessness I still regard as deplorably clumsy on the part of the forger: a neater hand at

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iniquity would, I am sure, have pilfered from the first version when the need arose to prepare a pamphlet dated 1906. . . . But the foreword to this one-act play I thought to be of real interest. For that reason it is here quoted in full.

§ 4

To R. D. L.:

“There are some ghosts,” said poor Jack, “that will not easily bear raising. . . .”

Thus am I confounded by words of my own choosing, for in truth I have raised one; and not for me, as for Dame Sylvia, does Chivalry blow upon a silver horn to drown the squeaking of that folly. Which is merely another way of saying that those younglings we two know and love, and who fretted me into the writing of a play for their theatricals, have rejected the outcome after a tentative rehearsal, with certain remarks for my pondering.

Well might that fat wholesome man have been left to the undignified fate his creator had appointed for him! — or at least in the staidier trappings wherewith I did gird his behemothian bulk in my story, *The Love-Letters of Falstaff*. Decked for the stage and with belladonna in its eyes, my sketch, they tell me, is a ghastly remains to which the footlights would add but the effect of funeral candles. In fine, that which lacks both plot and action, and offers, in lieu of lusty character, four gray ghosts, is not a play but an edifying exposé of the pitfalls and snares into which a romanticist might be expected to stumble when he dons the

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habit of a playwright. These and many other complaints which I shall strive to live down in the years before me, conveyed a discomforting unanimity of opinion on the part of my hopeful players.

With such humility as becomes one of our soberer estate in the presence of these, our juniors and betters, I pointed out that it was not my fault, assuredly, that Falstaff was no longer the merry taker of purses whose roaring oaths had filled all Gadshill. Nor that Will had never displayed any very hearty admiration for humanity nor found many more commendable traits in general exercise among its individuals than did the authors of the Bible; a spirit which, however distasteful to my palate, I was obliged in this instance to emulate! Yet I dared think (and my defense grew noticeably weaker under their incredulous stare) that old, gross and decayed as he had grown, the demiurge still clings to the old reprobate; yea, and the aura of divinity to Helen, whose beauty is drifting dust, so that Falstaff sees before him not Sylvia Vernon but Sylvia Darke.

Poor Falstaff. "Were't not for laughing I should pity him!"

But they had since ceased to listen. Vanished were they like the merry company whose mere names, thought Falstaff, were like a breath of country air. My script lay before me, eloquent in naught but their disillusion. Alone, I thought the fire winked knowingly at me, much like the one I had fanned from the embers of the past, as if it said: How old must a man become ere he shall be wise enough to con-

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tent these sure young critics, so awfully and so inevitably right?

I should have dropped the record of my folly into the flames and so played out the last scene in my puppet's stead, had I not remembered in time my promise to you. Well! — you had expected to receive it worn from the caresses of eager thumbs, scented perhaps with the bouquet of reverent applause. It comes to you fresh and unmarred by any defacing ardor; only its theme is sere, only its author's vanity thumb-marked!

And remember: 'tis not a play you give to the world but rather a spirit croaking to itself in a house where nobody has lived for a long time.

J. B. C.

§ 5

Now, upon the whole, I do not think that preface is badly done. There are slips, of course, in a world wherein nobody ever quite touches perfection in the delicate art of swindling. I would hardly have written, at twenty-six, in such very aged tones about "younglings" and "our juniors": at twenty-six I knew what is meant by the word "demiurge," and I had thus a patent advantage over whoever wrote that preface. Then, too, I sincerely hope that, not even at twenty-six, would I have printed the cacophony of that sibilant "since ceased" in a serious prose passage. It seems a bit too suggestive of old Jurgen's noble phrase about discomfiting single-handed the signal schisms of the pernicious and sinister Sylan.

ABOUT POOR JACK

And, most assuredly, at no time would I have called the story *The Love-Letters of Falstaff*, since that was not ever its name. . . . But—to the credit side of my traducer,—it was rather good forgery to take over, and to botch into something like a rough draft of the final product, that bit about the Bible from page 25 of *Beyond Life*, first published in 1919: and in the last clause of all the same trick is quite cleverly played with a half-sentence from page 350 of *Jurgen*, which also was not published until 1919.

I admit, in brief, that I more or less like that preface—as a whole. I temperately applaud its mimicking. Yet, at the same time, I would very much prefer for its author to write no more books for me unless I am to have the privilege of touching up his final draft. Moreover, I think I ought to have a royalty, if but as a slight solace for the loss of so many dear and intimate friends during that country-wide hecatomb of uncles.

Richmond-in-Virginia
August 1928

EXPLICIT

THIS thirteenth volume of the *Storisende Edition* of the works of JAMES BRANCH CABELL, containing FROM THE HIDDEN WAY (first published in November, 1916) and THE JEWEL MERCHANTS (first published in December, 1921), was designed by William Dana Orcutt and printed and bound at the Plimpton Press, Norwood, Massachusetts. It was completed in August, 1929, after which the type was destroyed. Issued in September, 1929, by Robert M. McBride & Company, New York.



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